



AGAINST THE DEFILEMENTS

A Collection of Translated Excerpts from Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto's Dhamma Talks

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by Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto*

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This book is a collection of translated excerpts from various Dhamma talks given by Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto at the Chula-dhamma Sālā on Khao Chi-On of Wat Yansangwararam, Chonburi.







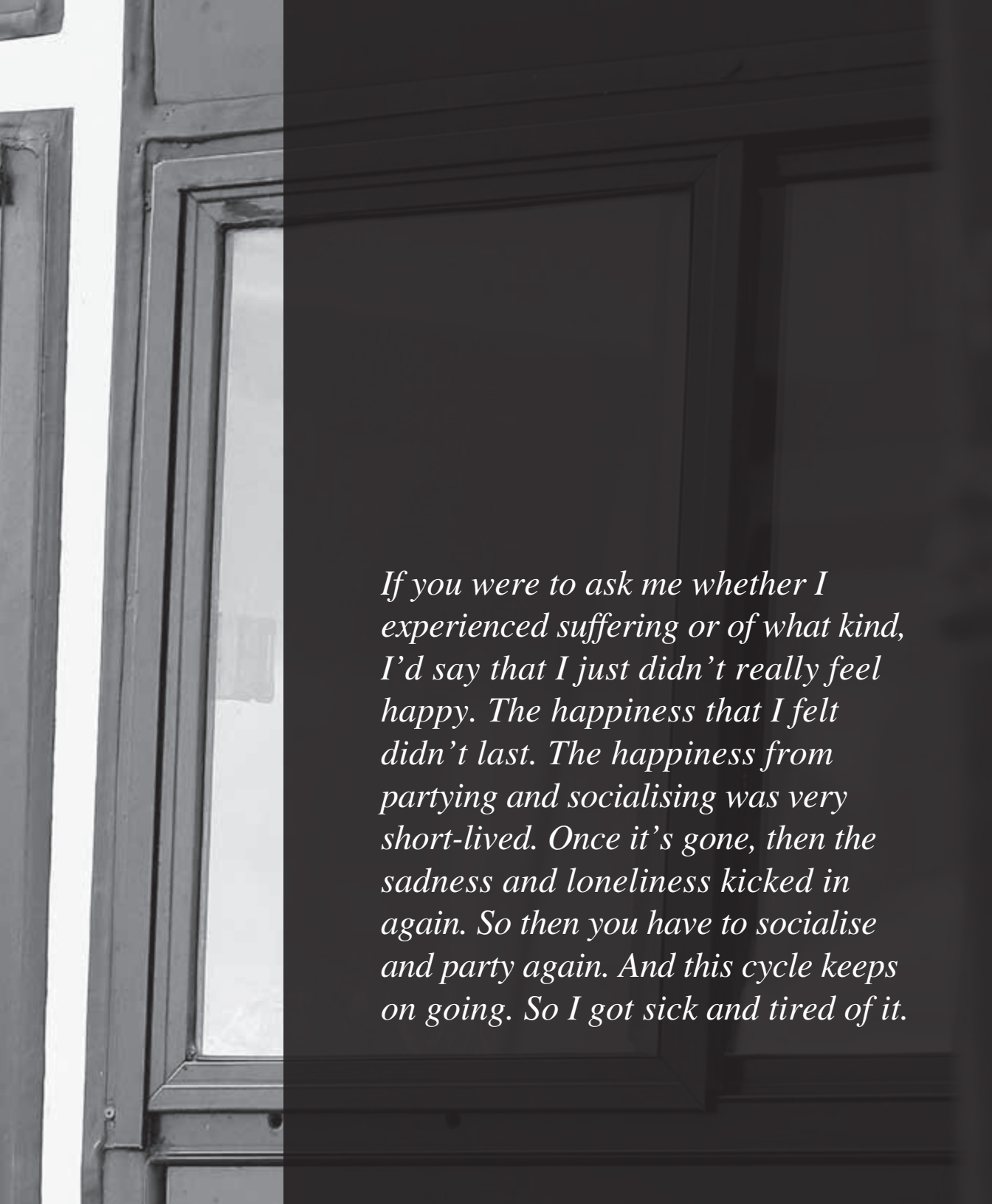
Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto

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*A monastic who has gone forth
to seek the true Dhamma of
the Buddha. He has found it by
renouncing the worldly ways to
end the cycle of saṃsāra—
going against the grain of
defilements.*







If you were to ask me whether I experienced suffering or of what kind, I'd say that I just didn't really feel happy. The happiness that I felt didn't last. The happiness from partying and socialising was very short-lived. Once it's gone, then the sadness and loneliness kicked in again. So then you have to socialise and party again. And this cycle keeps on going. So I got sick and tired of it.



Biography



Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto was born on 2 November 1947. His father put him under the care of his grandmother, who was living in Suphanburi, when he was two years old due to his father’s demanding work schedule.

Phra Ajahn Suchart had an interest in the Dhamma since he was in grade school at the Seventh Day Adventist Ekamai School in Bangkok, which is now Ekamai International School. After graduating high school, he went to study Civil Engineering at California State University, Fresno (USA). He returned to Thailand once he had completed his degree and was running an ice-cream parlour for a short while.

An English Dhamma book on impermanence (*anicca*)—translated by a foreign monk from the Buddhist Canon (*Tipiṭaka*)—inspired him to search for a true happiness through ordination.

Phra Ajahn Suchart decided to become a monk when he was 27 years of age. He was ordained at Wat Bovornives in Bangkok on 19 February 1975 with Somdet Phra Ñāṇasaṅvara—the late Supreme Patriarch (Somdet Phra Sangharājā)—as his preceptor. His parents had no objection to his ordination as it was his choice.

As to why I ordained, I didn’t ordain because I was heartbroken. I never had a girlfriend. I never experienced any loss; my parents were still alive. I wouldn’t know what to be heartbroken about. I wouldn’t know what to grieve for.

If you were to ask me whether I experienced suffering or of what kind, I'd say that I just didn't really feel happy. The happiness that I felt didn't last. The happiness from partying and socialising was very short-lived. Once it's gone, then the sadness and loneliness kicked in again. So then you have to socialise and party again. And this cycle keeps on going. So I got sick and tired of it.

[I thought] there must be something better than this. Once I've read Dhamma books, I found out that there is. So I started meditating and realised that this kind of happiness is real. Once you've experienced it, you feel at ease and there is no need to rely or depend on anyone. You didn't even need money, whereas socialising and partying require money.

Once I've gained concentration (samādhi), I got hooked and started wanting to become more and more absorbed in it. I wanted to be in samādhi all day and all night, so then you have to practise around the clock.

About six weeks after ordination, Phra Ajahn Suchart travelled to Wat Pa Baan Taad to stay for the rains retreat with Luangta Mahā Boowa Ñāṇasampanno in Udon Thani. He stayed there for nine years from his first to his ninth rains retreat. He recounted his experience at Wat Pa Baan Taad as follows:

I just simply carried on being a monk when I was at Wat Pa Baan Taad. I normally don't enjoy chatting with anyone or getting involved. So when I was there, I was simply trying to carry out my duties. I meditated and practised on my own. Once I finished my chores and duties, I would just return to my place and do both sitting and walking meditation.

When Luangta called for a meeting, I would attend to listen to his talk, but I never had a chance to really speak to him because I didn't really feel the need to. He already taught about everything in his Dhamma talks, ranging from precepts (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā) to liberation (vimutti).

I also read and relied on his Dhamma books. There were only two or three of them at the time: The Biography of Luangpu Mun, Paṭipadā, and The Mind's Glasses (Waen Duang Jai). I mainly read these three and one other book, which was his Dhamma talk in English from the trip he made to London, England. So I used these books and spent about an hour each day to further my knowledge, and so there was no need to bother him.

I also didn't want to get involved with anything or anyone at the time. I really enjoyed being by myself. I enjoyed tackling my own defilements and craving and addressing my own issues. So I wasn't interested in dealing with anyone, not even monks.

After his time at Wat Pa Baan Taad, Phra Ajahn Suchart returned to Pattaya and stayed at Wat Bodhi Sampan, Chonburi, for one year. He then moved to Wat Yansangwararam in 1984 and has resided there until present.

Phra Ajahn Suchart was conferred a monastic title along with an emblematic fan on 5 December 1993. He was also promoted to become the Assistant Abbot, in charge of monks' Dhamma practice and looking after the monastery's land and premises.





Luangta Mahā Boowa's words



'Tan Suchart is from Pattaya. Right after he was ordained, he came to stay at Wat Pa Baan Taad and was trained here for a long time. He went to Wat Yansangwararam after leaving here and has been there up until now. He seems to be very disciplined—someone with a firm resolution.'

5 September 2007

'He [Tan Suchart] has always been very moderate and preferred his solitude... He is very good at retaining the teachings and practices of respectable teachers.'

13 December 2006

'I feel that he is good at passing on the proper teachings and practices. He is calm and restrained. He is not interested in other people's business or getting involved with anyone. That is why I would pay him a visit.'

18 April 2006



*'Dhamma goes against the
grain of the worldly ways:
to fight against the defilements.'*

• *Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto*





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1

Puthujjana

Ordinary people:
Those who go with the flow



*We all have past merit and that is
why we are born as humans...
If you live just to indulge in sensual
pleasures, the past merit that you
accumulated will soon be gone.*

We all have past merit (*puñña*) and that is why we are born as humans. It is just a matter of whether you make use of this past merit. It could also be that the past merit is being thwarted by past actions (*kamma*).

To be born as a human means that you already possess a lot of good merit. To come across Buddhism is, in fact, the highest form of merit. But the amount of benefit you may gain from it does vary. It is like how you choose to spend money you've gained. You could invest it to make a profit. You could also spend it on gambling, eating and drinking, and partying and going out, but it will all soon be gone.

This is also how it is with our lives. If you live just to indulge in sensual pleasures, the past merit that you accumulated will soon be gone. However, if you live to cultivate merit through meditation practice and listening to Dhamma talks, the amount of merit you own will increase.



You cannot change your past actions (kamma), but you can change your future kamma by not creating any new kamma. When you do good deeds, you will do fewer bad deeds.

You cannot change your past actions (*kamma*), but you can change your future kamma by not creating any new kamma. When you do good deeds, you will do fewer bad deeds. When you give and practise generosity (*dāna*), you will develop moral virtue (*sīla*); you will not want to commit any sin or kamma. This is because merit-making instils in you loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karunā*), and empathy for others. You'd take other people's feelings into consideration with all of your actions.

You want others to be happy, so you make merit. You prepare and offer food to monks because you want them to be happy. This makes you not want to cause trouble for others.

But if you don't make merit, you will keep no matter how much money you've earned. When someone tries to take your money, you may even kill one another. This is because you're still attached to your possessions, so when someone tries to take them from you, you will fight for them.

However, if you train yourself to give regularly, you will be able to give things away when someone tries to take something from you. That is also a form of merit-making. Instead of getting angry and upset with them, you'd just give those things to them. Instead of wanting to hurt them, you'd just think that you'd better pay back what you might have owed them in the past.

If they're able to take your possessions, so let them. If they're able to trick you out of your money, so let them. If they're able to steal from you, you won't complain about it. When your possessions are gone, you will not be angry at or hate them. This is because you'd consider it as merit-making through giving.



*‘No matter how big the ocean is,
it still has a boundary.
But it is not so with our craving.
For craving has no bounds nor limits.’*

• *The Buddha*

Your thoughts can be both skilful (*kusala*) and unskilful (*akusala*). When monks chant at a funeral, '*Kusalā dhammā akusalā dhammā abyākatā dhammā*', it means there are three kinds of thoughts or mental concoctions: 1) Skilful, 2) Unskilful, and 3) Neither skilful nor unskilful.

If you think in a skilful way, it will bring you peace of mind. If you think in an unskilful way, it will cause you mental agitation and discontent (*dukkha*). If you think in a way that is neither skilful nor unskilful, it will not bring you peace of mind and contentment nor mental agitation and discontent.

However, thinking in such a way is not comparable to thinking in a skilful way—one that is in line with the path (*magga*), because thinking in a skilful way will bring you peace of mind and sense of ease. If you think in an unskilful way, it will be in line with your various cravings, pointing to the arising of discontent (*samudaya*).

For instance, when you're alone, you might want to go meet friends, to drink tea or coffee, to eat desserts, or to search for things on television and in books. If you think in such a way, it is considered unskilful, because it causes craving for the mind. So you cannot remain still, thus seeking out things to have and do.

Your actions would only gratify your cravings temporarily. After a short while, your thoughts and cravings would arise again, because they have become your habit. Whatever you've enjoyed doing, you will always think about that.

Once you've done it for a while, you will get tired and stop doing it. But after getting some rest, you will think about it again. Your life repeats in cycles of acting on these insatiable cravings.

If you take note of yourself, you will see that you've acted according to your craving since the day you were born. Have you ever had enough? Have you ever felt truly satisfied? Haven't you done enough? You've seen enough movies and shows. You've been to enough parties. You've travelled around and been to enough places. Perhaps it is time to stop. However, such a feeling has never crossed your mind due to the nature of your craving.

The Buddha once said that our craving is boundless and limitless: 'No matter how big the ocean is, it still has a boundary. But it is not so with our craving. For craving has no bounds nor limits. Once a craving has arisen, it will continue on and on, and grow stronger and stronger.' This is just like people say, 'When you have an inch, you want a whole foot. When you have a foot, you want a whole yard'. This is just how it is: our craving just keeps multiplying on and on.

So who bears the burden of gratifying these cravings? It is the mind that is in charge and gives a command to seek things, and so you have to act accordingly. Once you've done it, it is only happy for a little while. There will soon be a new command to seek other things, and so you have to act on it again. If you cannot get the things you want, then sorrow and sadness follow—disappointment and suffering arise. Suffering also prevails when you lose the things you've already obtained.





No one can fix or change anyone else. You only have to see to yourself by relying on the teachings of those who know... The Buddha cannot eradicate your defilements, and neither can any respectable teachers. They can only advise you on the methods to do so...

The Buddha said ‘*bhārā have pañcakhandā*’: the five aggregates are a very heavy burden. When you wake up, you have to feed your body and then walk after finishing your meal. You have to change your postures regularly and to take a bath. You have to do a lot of things. For example, when someone comes to see me, I have to give them a Dhamma talk, teach them, and speak to them—these are all work.

Without a body, you will be at ease as there will be no need to take care of the body. The mind can be separated from the body; that is to know what the mind is, what the body is, what makes the mind happy, and what makes it suffer. When the mind is aware of its nature and able to discern what causes suffering and agitation, then it will become disengaged.

It is better to let things be as they are. If you can still continue living, then do so. When you can no longer do so, when it is time to leave, then leave. No one can live forever. We all have to die one day. So you should make it count and not waste it while you still have the opportunity.

While you are still alive, you should practise Dhamma and cultivate merit and perfections (*pāramī*) to make spiritual progress. It will bring more peace and calm to the mind as well as wisdom in order to fight against your mental defilements (*kilesas*), namely craving, passion, and hatred. These defilements are the things you have to address more than anything else.

As for other people, you don’t need to fix or change them, because we all have to rely on ourselves in the end. No one can fix or change anyone else. You only have to see to yourself by relying on the teachings of those who know, such as the Buddha and his noble disciples.

The Buddha cannot eradicate your defilements, and neither can any respectable teacher. They can only advise you on the methods to do so. But if you don't make use of their methods, you then cannot rid yourself of the defilements.

The body is a means to cure issues of the heart. You need your body to listen to the Dhamma. Once you've listened, you can put your body to work—to get rid of the defilements. It is to practise walking and sitting meditation in order to fight against the defilements.

The defilements also need your body to carry out their work. They use your body to go out, watch movies, listen to music, eat, and drink. The defilements need your body and so do you.

So you have to drag yourself to get on a walking-meditation path and to go to the temple. Do not let yourself go along with the defilements. Once you can resist the power of the defilements, your craving and defilements will gradually disappear.

Nothing can then disturb your mind. You'll be at ease and happy wherever you are. Whether it is to sit, walk, or sleep, you'll be happy inside because there is nothing to trouble your mind. There is no craving or wanting of anything from the outside world. You live and eat only out of physical necessity to maintain your body, but your mind no longer has any craving to have or to be.





*Living as a lay person,
social obligations can sometimes
be an obstacle to one's practice.*

Living as a lay person, social obligations can sometimes be an obstacle to one's practice. You should find time to be away from them on occasions. For instance, you can do a retreat at a monastery on a weekend or a holiday. You need to take one step at a time. It is not like you can just dive into it. But you should at least make an effort and have the courage to do what you can, even though you don't enjoy it or find it difficult.

Since you know that this is the path one must take, you need to make it happen. You shouldn't wait for a good opportunity to come along as there is no such thing. This is because such an opportunity or the right timing is already here, so are good teachers.

Thailand, as a Buddhist country, is a nice place to live. People make merit (*puñña*), practise generosity (*dāna*), maintain the precepts (*sīla*), and practise meditation (*bhāvanā*). There is really nothing to stop you when it comes to practice. It only depends on you and whether you would do it.

If you still live and carry on the same old way, then you'll only just maintain the merit you've already made in the past. There will be nothing more if you don't push yourself and try to raise the bar. If you used to be able to maintain the five precepts, you'll only be able to keep those five precepts. If you used to make a certain level of merit through giving, you'll only be able to do it to the same extent.



Do not seek happiness through physical pleasures and worldly pursuits. We should only seek what is necessary... There are those who have come across Buddhism in this lifetime, and yet still are unable to benefit from it.

Certain people like to use expensive things; instead of buying a bar of soap that costs 10 baht, they prefer buying one that costs 100 baht. They're both soap and would do the job. Some people even prefer certain brands or those made in France. If you spend less money on things, you'll have more money to make merit. It will bring more happiness to your mind and further reduce your urge to spend money. It will help you develop your peace of mind even more.

If you want real happiness, you need to make a lot of merit. Do not seek happiness through physical pleasures and worldly pursuits. We should only seek what is necessary.

As a Dhamma practitioner, you are taught to live simply. You can make do with just two sets of clothes by alternating them; you wear one while washing the other. You can sleep on a wooden floor with just a thin mattress. You can simply survive with just two meals a day. A 50 baht meal can make you full just as much as a 5,000 baht meal would. Both give you a sense of fullness, which eventually disappears. But the happiness of someone who eats a 50 baht meal is greater than the other, because they don't feel the pressure to earn 5,000 baht to feed themselves.

The exception might be those of you with good merits, who were born with a fortune and have wealthy parents, so you're used to eating such food. But it can be something that holds you back because if you want to seek spiritual happiness, you have to live simply. If you've never done it, you may not be able to do it.

There are those who have come across Buddhism in this lifetime, and yet still are unable to benefit from it. Having been born as a millionaire, they become attached to their wealth and worldly pleasures that they've accumulated.

However, there are exceptional few, like the Buddha who had accumulated so much good merit to the extent that he was no longer attached to his wealth and royal status.

Is there a king these days who would abdicate his throne to become a monk? There isn't, because none of them have as much merit and spiritual perfections as the Buddha did. So they still cling to worldly pleasures, of which they already have so much.

However, the Buddha didn't care about or regret those things because he gained concentration (*samādhi*) very early on. According to his biography, his mind first entered a state of calm on the day of the Royal Plowing Ceremony, while he was sitting alone under a tree as others were carrying out the rituals.

This happened because of the past merit he had accumulated. He was very happy; the happiness he experienced outdid the kind obtained from drinking and eating, and through all the senses. That's why he could easily abandon worldly pleasures to become a monk and live the life of a beggar without any regret. He went from living in a palace to being a beggar. Think about it: he went from having 100 baht to only 1 baht and still could live with it.





For the calmness of their minds, practitioners must be careful with the five sensual pleasures when it comes to their lifestyle... You have to be well guarded when it comes to your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body.

For the calmness of their minds, practitioners must be careful with the five sensual pleasures when it comes to their lifestyle. You shouldn't let pleasure or happiness arise from any sensory contact. Therefore, you have to find a place in a forest with only trees and leaves to prevent any craving and desire (*tanhā*) from arising.

A sight of trees and leaves is not the same as a sight of people, especially that of the opposite sex. When you see women or men, your desire arises. You want to feel them. You want to be close to them. It makes you a slave to these sights. When you can't be near them, you experience suffering, sadness, and loneliness. This is what practitioners who want peace and calm must be careful of.

You have to be well guarded when it comes to your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. You should not let yourself indulge in sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations for the sake of pleasures and happiness. You shouldn't indulge, or act according to, your craving and desire. Any sensory contact should only be out of necessity.

For instance, when you eat, it's just to maintain your body from day to day, not for the sake of taste, happiness, pleasure, or satisfaction. But for those who are still attached to sensual pleasures, they will seek their favourite and delicious dishes and go to their favourite restaurants—that's eating for the sake of sensual pleasures.

But if you eat only for the sake of your body, you will eat whatever you have and wherever without being picky. Your only requirement will be that it's clean, so that the food will not make you ill but only ease your hunger. You will eat with moderation—not eating too much, since you aren't seeking pleasures from various sensory contacts through your tongue, eyes, and nose.

It is like you're taking medicine. You don't care about its taste. You just swallow it and let it do its job to cure any illness in your body. Food is a medicine to cure your hunger. Such is the sensory experience of those who seek happiness from a peaceful mind and not from the five senses.

You should wear simple clothes, not colorful or beautiful ones. Wearing beautiful clothes means that you are still attached to sensual pleasures. People get happy when they're praised for wearing their beautiful clothes. But those who seek a more profound and refined happiness—that of the mind—will not pay much attention to their clothes and colours. They wear clothes for the purpose of covering their bodies, preventing illness, and protecting them from insect bites.

In addition, they will not care about putting on make-up or using cosmetics and perfumes to conceal the unpleasant smell of their bodies. It is only natural for the body to smell bad from not having been washed. So Dhamma practitioners will clean their bodies by washing themselves with an unscented soap only to get rid of their body odours. They don't seek any pleasure from it.

In terms of sleeping, they will not sleep on an overly comfortable and soft mattress, making it difficult for them to get up and practise. Sleeping is only for the sake of resting their bodies. They can sleep anywhere, even without lying down. They can sleep even while sitting when they are very tired.

Some practitioners only practise in three postures: walking, standing, and sitting down. They will not lie down because they are afraid of getting attached to sleeping and its comfort and sleeping too much. It is a waste of their time; they would rather use the time to calm their minds than to sleep. Sleeping offers very little happiness in comparison to the happiness that comes from a peaceful mind.





*‘Dhamma-Vinaya will be your teacher
in place of Tathāgata from here on out.
Whoever sees the Dhamma, sees me.’*

• *The Buddha*





*Please take the Buddha's teachings
as the essence, because they are the
real flesh and blood of the Buddha...
The real Buddha is the Dhamma.*

Many teachers suggest that when you are eating and starting to feel that you have enough, you should stop eating and drink water until you feel completely full. That way you won't feel sleepy when you meditate. But if you already have enough and still ask for more desserts and other things, you will be too full.

As a practitioner, you have to be courageous. You must have the courage to sacrifice the happiness you get from eating and sleeping. Most of your problems concern eating and sleeping. That's why you haven't made much progress in terms of practice. So you have to live in barren conditions and stay at forest tradition monasteries sometimes. This can help your practice progress.

You must have a certain level of determination to endure certain inconveniences when it comes to eating and sleeping in those places. If you do not, staying in such places can do you more harm than good. It can cause you anxiety and negative thinking. You might think, 'Why would I do these kinds of crazy things?'

Mental defilements (*kilesas*) can lead you to think in all kinds of ways. So you have to be careful. But if you have a respectable teacher, it will benefit you. Sometimes kilesas may lead you to think in unwholesome ways, but out of your consideration and respect for your teacher, you won't dare to think in unskillful ways or in line with the kilesas.

Without having someone to respect, kilesas can lead you to think in all kinds of ways. You can even turn good things into bad things. It is a blessing to have a good teacher; they can encourage and guide you.

It is also good to have good friends—those who are interested in practice and with whom you can make merit and go to the temple. But when it comes to meditation practice, you must be on your own. It's like each band member who chooses to go on their own separate way once they've become famous.

When you know how to meditate and practise properly, you don't want to waste your time by making merit through giving (*dāna*). Like today, you all wasted more than ten hours travelling here. You spent most of your time on making *dāna* and a part of it on listening to the Dhamma, but you barely had the chance to meditate.

If you know how to meditate and practise properly, you will realise that it's not necessary to go to see your teacher very often. You only have to do so once in a while. Especially these days, you have so many recorded Dhamma talks and books. You barely need to see your teacher because their essence is in their Dhamma discourse, not in their physical presence. But you are deluded to become attached to their physical appearance. For instance, when you arrive at the temple, you rush to take a picture of them for worshipping; even though they teach you that their essence lies in their Dhamma.

The Buddha said: 'Whoever sees the Dhamma, sees me.' The Buddha never allowed anyone to sculpt his image during his lifetime. He only emphasised on his teaching of the Dhamma: '*Dhamma-Vinaya* will be your teacher in place of *Tathāgata* from here on out. Whoever sees the Dhamma, sees me.'

Please take the Buddha's teachings as the essence, because they are the real flesh and blood of the Buddha. The physical body is only an outer shell; it is like clothing that covers the body. The real Buddha is the Dhamma. Therefore, you should take the Dhamma as your teacher.

Keep studying and listening to the Dhamma. There are so many Dhamma talks from various teachers. Have you ever listened to them? You should listen to them on a regular basis. After listening, you should then meditate if you are able to. It doesn't matter how much you can do it in a day. Just practise as much as you can. You don't have to meditate only at home. You can also do it at your office. When you have some spare time, you can close your office door and then calm your mind even for just half an hour. It will be worth something.

Keep your mind focussed on the Dhamma and meditation practice—only these two things. Keep listening to and thinking about the Dhamma. Think in skilful ways and then try to calm your mind—alternate between the two. If you do this, you will keep making progress.

You should also try to cut back on social activities, such as weddings, parties, and so on. You should just forego these social events if they are not really necessary to attend because they will waste your time. They will make you regress. After you've come back from a party, you will not be able to practise and calm your mind. It will take several days to make your mind calm again. You should cut down on, or cut off, watching movies and television programmes and listening to music. It is necessary to give them up. You need to let go of the bad habits and cultivate good ones instead. You need to work on these two things simultaneously.



A teacher is like a map that gives you a sense of direction—pointing you to your destination.

A teacher is like a map that gives you a sense of direction—pointing you to your destination. For instance, they might tell you, ‘Once you arrive at this point, you need to carry on in that direction.’

You need to put into practice what you’ve heard. You should not let it go in one ear and out the other, and then revert to your old way. You won’t make any progress that way as time goes by. You will only maintain it at the same level as before.

If you have never meditated before, you should try it. You should train yourself to get up an hour earlier than usual before going to work. You should then use that time to pay respect to the Buddha, to do some chanting, and to meditate. You should do the same in the evening before going to bed.

Try to cut down on things that are unnecessary to your living, such as drinking, partying, going out, and shopping. If they’re not necessary, just try to cut them down.

It is better to spend that time on meditation practice. Try to get home earlier and not to go out. There’s no need to socialise too much. You should only attend social events that are truly necessary.



*Mindfulness is like an anchor.
If you want to moor a boat, you have
to use an anchor. That way, the boat
won't go adrift because of the current
as the anchor is securing it.
Your mind is just the same, that is,
there needs to be mindfulness to
keep it from wandering off.*

To constantly maintain your mindfulness, you need to begin practising from the moment you wake up. You have to train your mindfulness from the moment you're awake. Whatever you do, you need to be aware of every movement and every posture involved.

For instance, when you wake up and are about to get up, you need to be aware of your actions of getting up. When you stand, you need to be aware of your standing actions. When you walk, you need to be aware of your walking actions. Whatever you do, you need to be present with it. Do not think about the time or rushing to work while you're putting on make-up, getting dressed, or bathing.

Making mistakes, such as forgetting to close the window and the door, shows a lack of mindfulness. It shows that you weren't being present with the task at hand. You were caught up thinking about the time, the appointment, and so on.

You need to stop and cut out these thoughts. Even if it comes up, you just need to cut it out by thinking 'I have to focus on what I am doing first, on putting the most effort in the present'.

Whatever you do, you need to do it step by step. Make sure that your mind is aware of each and every step. Do not just let your body carry out the task while your mind is thinking about something else. That's considered 'lacking mindfulness'. It shows that you're unable to control your mind, so it goes astray because of other things. And you need to bring it back.

The only reason for practising is so that you can control your mind—your mind being under your command. Once it is under your control, it will stick to '*Buddho*' when you want it to. It won't think of other things.

By sticking to ‘Buddho’, the mind will become focussed. When the mind is not thinking about anything, any feeling or emotion will calm down and so will the mind.

If you keep reciting ‘Buddho’ without mindfulness, your mind will never be calm, even if you sit for hours. You’ll get discouraged if your mind keeps wandering off every two words of ‘Buddho’. No matter how long you sit, there’s no result, and therefore, no satisfaction or fulfilment.

But if you really stick to ‘Buddho’ even just for five minutes, it is possible to enter a state of calm. If you really don’t think about other issues and just keep reciting ‘Buddho’, your mind will soon be calm. Once it is calm, it is so worth it and really wonderful. The reason for being unable to attain that calm is because you can’t stay with ‘Buddho’ even just for ten seconds. Without mindfulness, it is impossible. No matter how much you so desire, it is not possible. Even though sticking only to ‘Buddho’ sounds simple when you hear it, you won’t be able to do it without mindfulness.

Mindfulness is like an anchor. If you want to moor a boat, you have to use an anchor. That way, the boat won’t go adrift because of the current as the anchor is securing it. Your mind is just the same, that is, there needs to be mindfulness to keep it from wandering off.

Without mindfulness, your mind will be swayed by emotions and other issues. When you think of something, you will get carried away thinking about other things without paying attention to what you’re doing, such as thinking about work while having dinner and keeping going back and forth.





It is the same for all beginners when it comes to sitting meditation; it won't feel very comfortable from not having sat in such a position before. But if you keep on sitting and training yourself, you'll eventually get used to it and feel comfortable sitting. Your meditation practice will then progress.

When you do your sitting meditation, no matter how comfortable your sitting posture may seem, you will eventually feel uncomfortable and experience pain. The most suitable posture is the lotus position (cross-legged). It allows you to sit for a long time and is good for your posture and health.

If you sit on a chair, you will sway back and forth. I am not telling you how to sit. But if you want a good result from your sitting meditation, then you should sit in the lotus position.

It is like playing sports. Take golfing, for example: if you want to be good at golfing, you need to develop the right swing. You may swing however you like; you can even swing with just one hand and nobody would stop you, but the ball won't go very far or hit the green.

It is the same with sitting meditation. If you want the best result, you have to sit properly. It is your own shortcoming if you can't, and so you shouldn't expect the full result. You will then have to do whatever you can, even though you may get only about 50 to 60 percent of the result.

But if you think you can sit in the proper posture, even if it hurts in the beginning, you should train yourself to do so. Keep sitting in the proper posture and your muscles and tendons will eventually become more flexible.

It is like stretching. It is difficult when you first start to stretch, but it gets easier as you become more flexible if you keep doing it.

It is the same for all beginners when it comes to sitting meditation; it won't feel very comfortable from not having sat in such a position before. But if you keep on sitting and training yourself, you'll eventually get used to it and feel comfortable sitting. Your meditation practice will then progress.

This is because sometimes we may sit in meditation for many hours in order to reap a result. If you sit on a chair, you won't last for many hours. So you should try to sit in the proper position.

If you really can't do it, then you have to accept that it is your own limitation. If you want good results, you should train yourself to sit properly. You should try to push yourself if it doesn't cause any harm. But if sitting in a proper way would cripple you, then you just have to accept that it is the result of your past actions (*kamma*) to find out about the Dhamma and its practice when it is too late.





To relinquish or let go of these feelings is to let them be. No matter how painful it gets, don't pay any attention to it. You may instead focus on chanting, on reciting 'Buddho', or on examining directly where and how badly it hurts.

If you don't have a lot of time for Dhamma practice and you can gain some result from sitting meditation alone, then just keep doing that for the time being. When you have some free time, such as on weekend or during a retreat, and you have a lot of time to practise, you can alternate sitting meditation with walking so that you don't waste any time.

This is for when you sit for a long period of time and feel tired and uncomfortable and would like to change your posture. If you don't alternate and only wait to meditate while sitting, then your mind can slip back and go unruly during those breaks. So you won't make a steady progress as you keep slipping back and forth.

To make sure of a steady progress, you have to cultivate your mindfulness in every posture. If you can't sit, then get up and walk. Change your posture and then keep on practising.

You can also use '*Buddho*' with the walking meditation. Or if you're too tired and don't feel like reciting '*Buddho*', you can also focus on your feet. For instance, you can be aware of your left foot when you're leading with your left and you can be aware of your right foot when you're leading with your right, just like marching soldiers. You can just be aware of each step that you make.

You can do whatever you like to stop your mind from thinking about other things, which would give rise to emotions and prevent your mind from calm. But if you keep focussing on your step, your mind will eventually calm down while walking.

There are many senses to the so-called 'calm'. There's a complete sense of calm. There's also an incomplete sense of calm; that is, you can still sense your body and feelings but your inner state of mind has changed. It's just like after a storm comes a calm.

If you meditate for a while, and your mind is still and not proliferating, then don't think. Try to maintain that focus for as long as possible. This is to give your mind a rest—to nourish your mind, to reinvigorate your mind. Wait till your mind withdraw from that calm.

Once you start thinking, then use those thoughts (*saṅkhāra*) for your contemplation. If not so, your mind will not have the strength it needs to do according to whatever you've contemplated.

'To start contemplating once your mind is calm' is to leave that state of calm (*samādhi*) first and then cultivate your wisdom. But when your mind is in *samādhi* or absorption, it is like someone is sleeping and so you shouldn't wake them up. You should let them have the rest that they need, because if they don't have enough rest and you wake them up to start working, they'll get irritated and lack the energy. But if you let them have their proper rest and get up on their own, then they'll be able to do things according to your command because they've recharged and are full of energy.

To calm your mind is to give your mind a rest that it needs in order to proceed with the work at the level of wisdom (*paññā*). But while your mind is in that state of calm, don't venture out to do anything. Just stay put and leave it alone until it is ready to withdraw from *samādhi*.

This state of calm can last less than half an hour, sometimes just five or ten minutes. It depends on each of your own strength of concentration. If you keep practising and become quite good at it, then it will last long. If you're new at it, it won't last very long.

Once you've withdrawn from samādhi, you can either get up or sit to contemplate the three marks of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*) of your body, your feelings (*vedanā*), your perceptions (*saññā*), your thoughts (*saṅkhāra*), and your consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Just keep contemplating mainly the three marks of existence on a regular basis. In the beginning, you'll mainly focus on your body. Your body is the first stage—easy and suitable for contemplation. Feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness require a more refined level of wisdom as they are abstract.

In the beginning when you use your wisdom to contemplate, you should focus on your body. Think about ageing, illness, and death. Take into consideration the unattractiveness of the body until you become detached from it—until you can let go of the physical appearance and the decaying of your body. Do it until you no longer have any concern for your body. You can then move onto contemplating mental aggregates (*nāma khandhas*).

While you're contemplating your body, sometimes your feelings come into the picture. For example, during a long sitting in meditation a sense of suffering or dis-ease (*dukkha-vedanā*) will arise, so you have to contemplate both your body and feeling in tandem.

Take into consideration that the sense of suffering is also impermanent. It arises, lasts for a while, and eventually dies out. So if you experience some kind of suffering at the moment, you then want that feeling to disappear—you want to be free from it. You have to try not to have such a desire. You have to just let that feeling be and take its own course.

You can actually face such a feeling if you prepare yourself for it. But your mind is used to running away from it whenever it comes up against you. You want it to disappear, and so you change your position.

For example, you change your sitting posture while meditating when it hurts. If you do that, then you have yet to let go of your feeling. Your mind is still under the control of your feeling.

To relinquish or let go of these feelings is to let them be. No matter how painful it gets, don't pay any attention to it. You may instead focus on chanting, on reciting '*Buddho*', or on examining directly where and how badly it hurts.

With contemplation, you'll see that these feelings are just like any sound that comes up in your mind just as you're hearing one now. So the physical pain is just like the sound in your mind. If you are averse to it and want to get rid of it, then you're adding on another layer of suffering. This is the kind of suffering in the Four Noble Truths. It is the suffering that comes from the craving for that sense of suffering to go away. It is the cause that makes such suffering much worse.

If this kind of suffering—the one that belongs to the Four Noble Truths—doesn't arise, no matter how severe the sensation gets, it won't be able to affect your mind.

What affects your mind is not the sensation, but an arising of suffering (*samudaya*)—the craving for the sense of suffering and the physical pain to disappear. This is what causes your mind to suffer.

If you bear in mind that such a pain is not unbearable—by keeping your mind focussed, observing it, reciting ‘Buddho’, and examining where the pain is—you’ll see that it is simply in your mind. If you aren’t afraid of it and don’t want it to go away, it will eventually fade away. As soon as your mind stops latching onto it, it will disappear. Your mind will become focussed and calm down.

A sense of courage will arise if you manage to do that. You’ll then no longer be afraid of any pain. The physical pain is miniscule compared to the suffering that your mind creates—the kind that comes from your craving and desire, from wanting the pain to go away.

If you can stop yourself from wanting the physical pain to disappear, then the self-created suffering will also fade away. The actual physical pain is not as bad as the self-inflicted pain from your craving and desire of ridding yourself of it.

For those who manage to get through this sense of suffering, you will go very far. Most people get stuck here; people get discouraged by the pain from sitting and give up, and so they don’t get very far. If you’re determined, then you’ll be able to get through it.

In the beginning, you may recite ‘Buddho’. When it hurts, don’t think about the pain, just keep reciting ‘Buddho’. ‘Buddho’ will then get you through. You’ll see that it is just like a sheer curtain. The pain is just a barrier that you don’t dare to go through. So you end up not getting through it. But if you keep on reciting ‘Buddho’, perhaps just ten or even five minutes, you’ll manage to get through it.



*You can carry out your contemplation
in every posture... You can investigate
anything with your wisdom.*

You can carry out your contemplation in every posture. You can contemplate while doing your work. When you get some money, you can also reflect on its impermanence—money comes, money goes.

You can investigate anything with your wisdom. When your eyes see a form, just know that it is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not self. The same goes for sounds and everything else.

When you meditate, there need to be privacy and silence, just like when you're sleeping. You can't fall asleep in the middle of an intersection because of the disturbance from all the stimuli. But if you'd like to develop your wisdom at an intersection, you can do so by taking note of the traffic and being aware of its impermanence.



*It all comes down to mindfulness.
Maintain your mindfulness with
'Buddho' or any of the meditation
subjects to ground your mind.*

When you first begin to practise, there will be many trials and errors. Sometimes you do something right and manage to calm your mind, but you don't really know how you managed to do it. So when you want to do it again the next time, you automatically expect that it will be as calm as the last time. So you keep thinking about the result and become obsessed with it.

It all comes down to mindfulness (*sati*). Maintain your mindfulness with 'Buddho' or any of the meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) to ground your mind. Your surroundings need to be quiet without any interference. Your state of mind also needs to be carefree—no problems with other people or any hindrance.

These conditions all come into play and bring about the calm. If you happen to have a quarrel with someone or any issues, it will be impossible to calm your mind. Even if you do it the right way, you won't be able to meditate because of all the lingering issues.

It's just like listening to the radio. On certain days the reception is really clear when there is no interference. And there are days when a roll of thunder and other sounds just keep interfering.



Negative emotions can cloud your mind at times, making you feel discouraged, downhearted, and weary. You need to use your mindfulness and discern your emotions... You need to understand that these emotions are impermanent (anicca)—they do come and go.

You cannot be discouraged when it comes to meditation practice. You will meet obstacles and feel unmotivated at times but you must not stop practising. Take a break. If it is not going so well today, then take it easy. Read a Dhamma book instead. If you push it too hard or pressure yourself too much, it will only stress you out even more. There will be a resistance and it will cause more problems in your next practice.

So on days that you can't really meditate and you've already tried as much as you could, then take a little break. But don't make it too long. Only take that day off so that you can start again the next day. Just keep on practising. It will be nice and easy on certain days. Your mind is temperamental. It's good on the days that your mind is inclined towards the path (*magga*). And it's difficult on the days that your mind is leaning towards the arising of suffering (*samudaya*).

It is just like walking: against or with the wind. It will be easy on the day that you have the wind at your back; your mind calms down easily during your meditation without much distractions. But on the day that you keep obsessing about various issues and constantly feel frustrated, your mind won't be calm no matter how hard you try.

So you have to watch your own mind. If you really can't sit and meditate, then change it up and do something else. Try reading a Dhamma book if your mind is distracted. Cultivate your wisdom instead on days when your mind is prone to thinking and unlikely to calm down.

Investigate the thirty-two parts of your body. Contemplate the cycle of birth, illness, and death. When you feel restless, you may also contemplate that sense of restlessness to develop wisdom. It will be easy to calm your mind on days that you don't feel like thinking and just want to stay put.

So you have to keep watching your own mind. Your mental defilements (*kilesas*) will keep fooling you. Sometimes it will give you a sense of overconfidence, misleading you to think that you're almost there and about to reach the enlightenment. And sometimes it will discourage you, tricking you into thinking that you barely made any progress.

These thoughts will come up constantly. So you just have to realise that they are just thoughts, just like clouds in the sky that come and go and won't last forever. These thoughts and feelings will also pass, just like clouds that block the sun and cause an overcast sky.

Negative emotions can also cloud your mind at times, making you feel discouraged, downhearted, and weary. You need to use your mindfulness and discern your emotions. Your mind is the perceiver, just like the sun, whereas emotions are like clouds. You need to understand that these emotions are impermanent (*anicca*)—they do come and go.

Don't let them sway you. Stick to your routine and duties. When it is time to chant, just chant. When it is time to meditate, just meditate. Even if you don't feel like meditating, just do it. Just think of it as having a meal. There are days when you don't feel like eating but you still need to eat, because you know that you'll be hungry if you don't.

You will feel that your mind has regressed on days that you don't meditate. So even if you don't make progress, at least maintain your position so that you don't regress. Just do whatever you used to do. Just do it regardless of the result. When it is time to practise, just practise.





Meditation practice is just like waves. When you're on a high, you're full of motivation (chanda) and energy (viriya), but there are also days when you're on a low. It fluctuates. That's just how it is.

When you feel discouraged—not reaping results from your effort, you’ll think that it is a waste of time and feel unmotivated. You have to keep thinking of the Buddha and other respectable teachers when you feel disheartened.

They taught that when there’s despair, you have to fight and put up with it. You have to stay focussed and keep on practising. If you don’t, then you may be worse off the next day—having regressed. At the very least, you’ll be able to maintain your level if you keep on practising. Once you’ve stopped, it is like backtracking because you’ll be living off your merit that you had done in the past. And when you’ve used up your past merit, you’ll go down even further.

Therefore, when you don’t feel like practising, you have to force yourself to practise. It is to maintain your level at the very least. This is so that you don’t have to waste your time trying to regain your old position and can just keep making progress.

Meditation practice is like waves. When you’re on a high, you’re full of motivation (*chanda*) and energy (*viriya*), but there are also days when you’re on a low. It fluctuates. That’s just how it is.

There are days when it's easy to meditate and be calm. And there are days when it feels like moving mountains to do so. No matter how hard you try to focus on '*Buddho*', it is just not possible. Your mind keeps thinking about other things and constantly gets distracted.

Don't get upset or discouraged. Stay calm. Tell yourself that it is okay and that today is a bit challenging. It's like driving uphill—it requires a bit more work on the way up, but once you've reached the top, it is easy on the way down.

You may take it easy on the day that you have tried meditating and just can't seem to stay focussed or stop your mind from thinking—if you've tried your best and it still doesn't work. But you shouldn't give up too easily. Try to push yourself first until you really can't do it. If there's no use and it causes you stress and suffering instead, then take a break.





Just keep on meditating whenever you feel lonely and sad. Those emotions will disappear once your mind has calmed down. When you meditate on a regular basis, it will then become your habit. That's when you have a cure—a right and reasonable one.

I first began practising at home. I just happened to have a row house that was unoccupied. So I stayed in it alone and practised meditation for about one year. But I didn't stay there the entire time. There were times when I went to stay somewhere else. I sometimes went to stay on an island and such. But I mainly stayed alone. I did sitting and walking meditation in the house. I read Dhamma books and tried to control my desires to go out. I tried not to indulge myself because I knew that it was only enjoyable when I was out. But once I came back, I'd get lonely and sad.

It is better to resist these urges and to control your mind in order to fight against the loneliness and depression in you. You know that they are mental defilements (*kilesas*), that they are emotions, and that they are only made up by your mind. If you keep on trying to do your sitting and walking meditation, these emotions will eventually subside on their own. This is the right way to address them.

Once you've meditated, these feelings and emotions will disappear. That's when you realise the true value of meditation practice. If you don't meditate and instead let your mind ponder on things, you'll soon enough want to go out. When you don't get to go out, you'll get frustrated and sad. Once you've re-established your mindfulness, you need to hurry back to your meditation practice.

Just keep on meditating whenever you feel lonely and sad. Those emotions will disappear once your mind has calmed down. When you meditate on a regular basis, it will then become your habit. That's when you have a cure—a right and reasonable one.

Not knowing how to address the issue, whenever you feel bored and upset, you'd go out shopping. You'd go sightseeing to take away the negative emotions. But once you come back home, you'd feel the same way. The suffering would come back again.

But if you resort to the Dhamma—simply do sitting or walking meditation whenever there's suffering and not think about going out and try to fight the urges, the suffering will subside once your mind is calm. So then you can just be at home. You're at ease when your mind is calm. Repeat the same thing when it resurfaces. If you're able to practise consistently, then there's no chance for it to resurface. With discontinuous practice, boredom may arise during the in-betweens. There's no chance for such a feeling to arise if you practise continuously.





But to meditate, you shouldn't really stick to the time. It is better to stick to the result of your meditation practice.

Your mind has its own internal clock. For example, you usually wake up whenever you set your mind to. It all depends on how you train your mind, although it may not always be right on the dot. But as far as I've noticed, if you set the time you want to wake up in your mind before going to bed, you'll actually wake up then. It is as if there is a subconscious mind that keeps reminding you and when it is time, you'll suddenly awake.

But to meditate, you shouldn't really stick to the time. It is better to stick to the result of your meditation practice. Sometimes the time is up just as you're about to gain something. So you end up not getting what you could have gained.

So it is better to not set the time when you meditate. It is better to keep it open. You should sit and meditate for as long as possible until you reap a result or until you need to get up as you can no longer stand it.

To fully reap from your meditation, you need to practise like a pro, that is, to only meditate. If there's a time limit, then you won't get a proper result. So I would like you to keep on meditating and practising until you see some result. Once you start seeing the results, you'll then be able to change your career, from being a businessman to a Dhamma practitioner.



It is difficult to pursue your practice as a lay person due to unfavourable surrounding conditions... There is a difference between practising at home and at a monastery.

It is difficult to pursue your practice as a lay person due to unfavourable surrounding conditions. It is just like receiving treatment when you're ill. There's a difference between getting treated at home and at a hospital. It is just not as fully equipped at home as it is at the hospital, in terms of medicine, care, and equipment. You can perform any procedure or operation whenever you like as opposed to at home.

It is the same with Dhamma practice. There is a difference between practising at home and at a monastery. There may be an exception for those with lots of merits and wealth, who have a room to practise by themselves with no one to bother them. In that case, they can practise at home just like at the monastery.

As for me, I practised alone at home for one year and there was no one to disturb me. I did make considerable progress, but I made much more progress as an ordained monk in a monastery. The conditions are much more conducive to practising as there is a teacher to keep motivating you.



*Thinking of things that used to make
you happy when you're unhappy
will make you sad and depressed...
You know what you need to do:
restrain your thoughts (saṅkhāra).*

Those who already know how to meditate will also know the kind of environment that they need in order to practise. You won't need entertainment. You won't need friends. And you won't need to cure your loneliness by talking to anyone.

When your mind is calm, you won't really think of anything. And you won't proliferate your thoughts. But if your mind isn't calm, it will keep on thinking. These thoughts, in turn, will give rise to all kinds of emotions.

Thinking of things that used to make you happy when you're unhappy will make you sad and depressed. You'll then want to relive such happiness. If you used to enjoy your companions and lifestyle, then you won't be able to help but think about those past memories, especially while you meditate on your own in a forest. You won't be able to help but miss your friends and old lifestyle, and so you'll be sad and lonely. Eventually, you will not be able to stand it and end up going back to them.

If you've meditated before and managed to calm your mind, you won't think about other things when you're here because you have your duty. You're aware of your responsibilities. You know what you need to do: restrain your thoughts (*saṅkhāra*).



*It all comes down to the fact that
nothing is ours: 'sabbe dhammā anattā'
—all phenomena are not self.
You were born with nothing and you'll
die just the same way. That's all there
is to it. Don't get attached to anything.*

If you carry on doing your meditation practice, there will be a seed of wisdom (*paññā*) in your mind to fight against defilements (*kilesas*). Listening to those who have direct experience with the mind from their practice will save you time and effort from fumbling around. When you get to certain points, you'll know immediately what to do next in order to keep moving forward and carry on practising.

If you don't have anyone to guide you, you'll have to figure it out on your own and sometimes there will be mistakes. Those who have never been through it before will get lost because they'll become attached to things. They may become attached to giving, and they'll keep wanting to give more. They don't understand that giving is for leading them to keeping their precepts. Then again they aren't aware that keeping the precepts is to lead them to practising meditation. So they get caught up in keeping their precepts by being too scrupulous in order to be pure. Anything they do becomes a cause for concern about whether they've broken their precepts. They end up with anxiety instead of peace of mind. If they manage to practise to the level of concentration (*samādhi*), they'll then be caught up in absorption. They don't want to withdraw from samādhi to contemplate things; thinking can be very distracting and disturbing. But wisdom will not arise if they don't contemplate.

In fact, giving (*dāna*), precepts (*sīla*), and cultivation through meditation practice (*bhāvanā*) support one another. They are like stepping stones. Once you've given *dāna*, you should then move on to the next level, *sīla*. When you're at the level of *sīla*, you should next focus on cultivation through practice, *bhāvanā*.

You can also do them all at once. If you have established giving and are ready to undertake the precepts, then go ahead. You can maintain the five or the eight precepts. Keeping the eight precepts will make your practice easier. There is a difference between the five and the eight precepts.

Keeping the eight precepts is better because it is more conducive to attaining calm. Once you're calm, then you have to develop wisdom. Contemplate the three marks of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*) and the five aggregates (*khandhas*)—forms (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), mental fabrications or thoughts (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—in order to realise that they are just natural states of being and that there is no self.

You think that the body, thoughts, and emotions are yours, but in reality they are just part of nature. Your body, for instance, is a composition of earth, water, wind, and fire.

Feelings and bodily sensations are just a result of physical contact, which is called *kāya-vedanā*. Emotion (*citta-vedanā*) is a result of your mental proliferation. If your thoughts lean towards defilements, then a sense of suffering (*dukkha-vedanā*) will arise. If your thoughts are inclined towards virtue (*dhamma*), there will then be a sense of ease and calm.

Continuing to contemplate these things will make you understand and know how to practise, allowing you to let go. Once you've understood, you'll let go. There won't be any problems or trouble with anyone. However other people behave, you'll see through them. You won't expect anything from them.

When you're involved with someone, you'll readily see that there are only two outcomes: to stay or to part. Once you're aware of that, you're prepared to accept both outcomes. If they leave, then so be it. And if they stay, then so be it. Your mind won't be disturbed. Your mind will so be calm. But if you don't accept this fact—only holding onto the idea that they have to be with you forever and not leave you—you'll then become agitated and upset when you sense that they might be leaving you. You have to understand and be able to accept this universal truth.

There are three kinds of feelings (*vedanā*): happiness (*sukha*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and neither *sukha* nor *dukkha*. Knowing that it circles between these three kinds will allow you to accept whatever happens. You don't need to rush into, or jump at, anything. Neither do you need to push nor chase anything away.

When you're happy, just don't get carried away—wanting it to last forever. When you're suffering, don't long for it to go away. Just let it be. Bear in mind that it will pass sooner or later. Be mindful of its condition and nature. When you're happy, just be aware of your happiness. When you're suffering, just be aware of your suffering. Your mind need not crave for one thing or another. That is how to practise.

In order to control your mind in such a way requires a regular meditation practice. The meditation practice will make your mind equanimous (*upekkhā*). But the equanimity will only last during the absorption (*samādhi*). Once you've withdrawn from it, you'll have to resort to wisdom in order to prolong that sense of equanimity. If not, then your mind will instantly lose that sense of equanimity.

When you come across things that make you happy (*sukha-vedanā*), you'll jump at them. And when you come across things that make you unsatisfied (*dukkha-vedanā*), you'll run away from them. You have to restrain yourself. When you find happiness, hold back. Don't rush towards it or jump at it. When you face suffering, don't run away from it. Calm your mind just as when your mind is absorbed in *samādhi*. If you can't control it, then you can keep on reciting 'Buddho' until that sense of suffering passes.

For instance, when you're ill, the desire to get better is very tormenting. But you can calm your mind by continuing to recite 'Buddho', not craving to get better, letting your emotions be, and reminding yourself that you'll just get better when it is time. Then your mind won't be agitated while you're ill.

You can cure the suffering in your heart and mind, but you can't cure the physical pain. The physical pain is due to external causes and conditions. You'll feel better with time. Your mind is what you can cure and care for, so that it doesn't have to suffer along with your body.

You need both concentration and wisdom when it comes to meditation practice. The mental concentration will allow your mind to be equanimous during the state of calm. But once your mind withdraws from concentration and if it's not under the control of wisdom, then your mind will waver. It will sway towards happiness and away from suffering—your wisdom is what keeps it from fluctuating.

The wavering of your mind is dukkha—what gives you suffering. You'll find out for yourself when your mind is calm and as soon as it gets shaken, suffering will arise immediately. These wobbles are due to your craving and desire—craving not to have, craving not to be (*vibhava-taṇhā*) and craving to have, craving to be (*bhava-taṇhā*). Wanting to run away from your suffering is considered *vibhava-taṇhā*.

We all want happiness, that is, the happiness in terms of feelings and sensations, or *vedanā*. But it is not the kind of happiness that comes from a peace of mind. The happiness that comes from inner peace—be it through concentration or wisdom—is a form of liberation (*vimutti*), which arises from the stillness of your mind.

There are three kinds of happiness. There's a kind that comes from your feelings or sensations. For instance, when you see some forms that you like, then that is *sukha-vedanā*—a sense of appreciation arises. Such is a kind of happiness that arises and passes away; it changes according to external causes and conditions. You have to be careful with this kind of happiness. Don't be fooled by it. Don't hold onto it. Don't get attached to it.

Hearing an unpleasant sound is *dukkha-vedanā*. Don't be averse to it. Just try to bear listening to it. There's nothing you can do about whatever bad things people say. It is none of your concern. What concerns you is to be aware of it and then to let it go. Focus on thinking that you can't stop them, but you can stop your mind. All of the Dhamma teachings boil down to the mind—to maintain the calmness of your mind and to not let it get carried away or fooled by anything. You must cut it off, let it go, and leave it behind.

It all comes down to the fact that nothing is ours: ‘*sabbe dhammā anattā*’—all phenomena are not self. You were born with nothing and you’ll die just the same way. That’s all there is to it. Don’t get attached to anything. Make the most of what you have in the same way that the Buddha did. The Buddha gave up all his wealth and possessions and became a monk to cultivate *śīla*, *saṃādhi*, and *paññā*.

The more you practise, the sooner you’ll be liberated. When you build a house or a hut (*kuṭi*), if you only put in two or three nails a day, you can keep doing it for the next ten years and it still won’t be completed. But if you do it all day all night, then it will be done within one or two days.

It is the same with meditation practice. If you do it relentlessly, then soon enough you’ll become enlightened, just as it was during the Buddha’s time. But instead, you keep holding onto other things and spend more time doing those things. Just compare the time you spend on your practice to the time you spend doing other things. The answer should be very clear to you.





To cultivate your mind through practice is to maintain your mindfulness. If you're being aware of your body posture and mind, then that is considered 'practising'. You need to be aware of your self—your body and mind. Don't get distracted by unnecessary things.

It is very important that you keep practising as much as you can. You may carry on giving and keeping the precepts. It is easy to give; it can be anything, such as food and so on. You can even donate money. And you normally keep your precepts anyway, whether it is the five precepts or the eight precepts. But what you have to keep doing constantly is to cultivate, or develop, your mind through practice (*bhāvanā*). It doesn't mean that you have to be in your room or at a monastery in order to practise. You can in fact practise whenever and wherever.

To cultivate your mind through practice is to maintain your mindfulness. If you're being aware of your body posture and mind, then that is considered 'practising'. You need to be aware of your self—your body and mind. Don't get distracted by unnecessary things.

But if you have to think about something else, then just figure it out. Once you've figured it out, then let it go and come back to watching your body and mind. Throughout the entire day, your body and mind are in a constant flux. Your thought is constantly on one thing or another. So you have to keep an eye on it—to see whether it is leaning towards ignorance (*avijjā*) or Dhamma.

If you think about making money and gaining possessions, then that is worldly and leans towards ignorance. So you have to bring it back to a moderate and modest level. You just need to earn what is necessary, just enough to feed yourself and meet the basic necessities.

It is better to work on the Dhamma and cultivation. You have to constantly bring your mind back to practice. Don't become attached to anything that you do. You just have to be aware and then let go.

Just do whatever you have to do. Don't worry about the results. If it has already passed, then let it pass. Just keep on focussing on the present.

When you manage to practise, then you'll be able to keep your precepts. You might not reap the full result because your mind is still attached to money and wealth. You are still possessive, stingy, and selfish. You won't be able to make much progress. You won't want to get ordained because you still care about your money and assets.

Had the Buddha not done a lot of giving in his former life when he was the charitable prince (*Vessantara*), he would have found it difficult to become a monk, considering his princely status. If you have 100 baht but only give away 10 baht and keep the remaining 90 baht, then you're still attached to money and won't be able to get ordained yet. But if you have 100 baht and give away the whole amount, then you're no longer attached to it.

Even though doing meditation practice and keeping the precepts come with a lot of merit and benefit, you might not reap the full result just because your mind is still attached to money and wealth. So it depends on each individual. You can't force or change anyone.

Some people think that they can keep hanging onto things. When your mind still cares about those things, then it is still attached to them. It's just like a monk who is attached to his robes. Even when he's dead, he still hangs onto and comes back for his robes, missing out on the noble possessions and qualities.

You have to give up the worldly possessions first in order to gain the noble possessions. Seeing that the worldly possessions are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not self will make you want to give them up. They are actually suffering and not happiness; they bind you to the endless cycle of rebirth and death. You have to let them go. And once you've let go, you won't then be reborn when you die. But if you're still attached to them, you could be reborn as a gecko in your old house.

If you haven't reached a real level of practice or cultivation, then it is just a formality, which is not considered 'bhāvanā'. You may think that you're practising and keeping your precepts, but your mind is still attached to wealth and possessions. You still do not fully understand the purpose of the practice: to cut off, to let go, and to leave behind.

If you don't let go, then your mind will never be calm. If one day you meditate and happen to let go for just a moment, your mind will be calm. Once you've experienced that calm, you'll give all of your money and wealth to other people. This is because thinking about money and wealth will disturb your peace of mind, and so you do not want any of it.

When I was a new monk, my parents had a piece of land that they put under my name and kept sending me letters to sign. Sometimes the landowner next to it wanted to build something, so they needed my signature. I just didn't want anything to do with it, because it was a lot of trouble and I would never make use of it. When it is time to let go, you'll be able to let go on your own. But it is not the end of world if you still cannot.

If you have some assets, then you can give them to your children and grandchildren. If you can give them up without any condition, then that is considered 'letting go'. It depends on whether or not you do it wisely, because you still need a portion of it to take care of yourself. If you have given it all up and end up with nothing, what would you do? What if your children or grandchildren don't support you or spend all your money? You should put some aside if you haven't ordained. But if you're ordained, then it is not a problem. This is because you'd then have your robes, which are special possessions, to take care of you and make sure that you have something to eat everyday.

But if you are still a lay person and need to feed yourself, what would you do if you don't have any money? So you have to put some aside to take care of these needs. It doesn't need to be so much that it becomes a burden. If you think there may be a need for it, then you can save some for yourself. You can put it in a bank and don't have to worry about it. You can then carry on practising your meditation and keeping your precepts. And there won't be any problem.

One day when you have truly experienced that peace of mind, you'll be annoyed with having to take care of things—signing papers and going to offices that have nothing to do with calming your mind. You'll want to sell or give them to someone else because you no longer have any need for them.

When your mind is starting to feel calm, you will then know that there's something better inside yourself. It will be the only thing that you want, which is to calm your mind. When you reach that point, you'll give no matter how much money and wealth you have to others.





*It doesn't matter if you're a man
or a woman, it has to do with the
mind. Both men and women have
defilements. Both are also equally
capable of cultivating Dhamma...
It all comes down to your citta.
If your mind is already set on it,
then nothing can stop you.*

It doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman, it has to do with the mind (*citta*). Both men and women have defilements (*kilesas*). Both are also equally capable of cultivating Dhamma. It might be a bit less convenient for women in terms of places to practise. But there are places of certain respectable teachers for meditation practice. Take Mae-chee Kaew for example—she still managed to become enlightened.

It all comes down to your *citta*. If your mind is already set on it, then nothing can stop you. But if your mind is not set on it, then nothing can make it happen for you. It depends on you and your effort to push yourself. Whether or not you can push yourself depends on your initiative. If you don't know, then you have to study a lot—read Dhamma books, listen to Dhamma talks on a regular basis, and practise what you've heard.

For me, when I first came across the Dhamma, I read Dhamma books for about three to four months. I read about giving (*dāna*), precepts (*sila*), and cultivation (*bhāvanā*). I read about concentration (*samādhi*) and contemplation (*vipassanā*), but I never got around to sit and meditate. Until one day, it occurred to me that I had read so much about it and had yet to put it into practice. So I put the book down and began meditating. As soon as I sat down to meditate, I managed to carry on with it. It was a bit difficult in the beginning; I felt pain here and there. But if you don't start and practise, you won't get anywhere, even if you keep on reading for the next ten years.

Studying is like looking at a map. If you have already looked at the map but haven't started your journey, then you haven't gone anywhere, even if you can remember all the directions. Therefore, you have to put into practice what you've heard.



*‘Choose your company wisely.
Be with someone who is wiser or more
skilful... It is better to be alone if you
can’t find someone who is wiser or
more skilful. Don’t be with those who
are less virtuous as they will pull you
down and make you worse off.’*

• *The Buddha*

If you can't even save yourself, how can you save others? If you don't know how to swim yourself, how can you help others? You first have to learn how to swim yourself. Once you know how to swim, then you can teach others. Others will have faith in you when you've learnt how.

Take the Buddha for example. Once he became enlightened, his father as well as many others started having faith in him. They invited him to teach in the palace and soon enough they all became enlightened themselves.

If the Buddha were to remain in the palace, he wouldn't have become enlightened. So he went ahead and set an example to prove that it was worthwhile, and then came all the faith and devotees. It is easy to let things happen on their own, that is, naturally. It is much easier than trying to make things happen. It can be very trying to do so as they might be beyond your ability.

It is better to accept that no one has the same amount of merit (*puñña*) and bad deeds (*pāpa*) as anyone else. No two people have accumulated the same amount of merit and perfections (*pārami*) or have given to the same extent. One person may want to make merit while the other may not. One may enjoy eating and drinking while the other may not. This is due to differences in the cultivation of merit and perfections.

It is just that two people happen to meet and there's a reason for them to be together, and so they stay together. This is not to say that they should go their separate ways. But whenever they have a chance to do their own thing, then they should. It's good if the other person wants to come along, but it's alright as well if they don't. They have to do it themselves in the end anyway. You can't eat for them. They have to feed themselves and so do you. When you're eating and if they don't feel like it, can you force them to? There's nothing you can do.

It is the same with meditation practice. It is something that each individual has to do on their own. No one can do it for anyone else. But you can set an example so that it motivates and encourages others.

For example, if you happen to be with someone who is very determined, then their determination will also rub off on you. Like I've told you before, I thought that I was already very determined when I was living and practising on my own. But when I was living with others, who were even more determined, I realised that I was still not that committed, which made me even more persistent. But if you happened to be with someone, who is less determined, they would pull you down.

The Buddha said: 'Choose your company wisely. Be with someone who is wiser or more skilful. Or choose those at the same level as you. Don't choose those who are less wise or virtuous. It is better to be alone if you can't find someone who is wiser or more skilful. Don't be with those who are less virtuous as they will pull you down and make you worse off.'

To choose companions for Dhamma practice or spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitta*), you have to choose those who are more skilful and better than you. That way they can help and support you, just as all the Buddha's disciples chose the Buddha himself. They weren't let down by their choice.

Wishing others well is beneficial. Seeing something good makes you want others to have it and benefit from it; but you also have to accept that not everyone has the same potential, just like vessels that come in different sizes.

Some of you might have a bucket, and some might have a bowl. Those with a bowl can only take a bowlful of water, whereas those with a bucket can take more. Although you may want to give more to some, if they only have a small bowl, then it would overflow. It will be a waste of your time and energy as they'll never meet your expectation.

You have to work on their potential—increase their capacity or the size of their vessel, so that they can benefit more. This can be done through continual cultivation—increasing gradually the practice of giving, keeping precepts, and meditating.

You have to start from where you're at and then gradually work your way up. If you keep on doing it, you will soon reach your goal. But if you keep worrying about others, you'll get sidetracked and end up not practising or making any progress.

If you ask whether this is selfish, then it is a harmless kind of selfishness. It doesn't trouble anyone. Everyone has their own selfishness—self-interest and self-preservation. Everyone has to take care of themselves first. This kind of selfishness—the kind that doesn't cause trouble for anyone or make you forego any of your duties—is harmless.

If you still have obligations to others, you should take care of them first. But when you have spare time, you can also work on yourself. If you invite them along and they come with, then it is their merit. If they don't, they're simply not ready for it. You have to accept that fact. You won't be able to practise yourself if you keep worrying.



You can practise regardless of the conditions. It is just a matter of progress. Sometimes when there's no other option, then you just have to bear with it.

Taking care of your parents is also a form of practice. If you don't look after your parents, who will? It is a path one must take. If you can't take a direct path, then you just have to go along with it and take care of your parents first. If you don't look after them, your mind will run into problems during your practice anyway. You'll feel bad about yourself and not be able to practise properly.

I think taking care of your parents shouldn't be an obstacle to your practice. If you're smart enough, you'll be able to manage. That is, you'll be able to find time to be away from them. But if your parents can no longer take care of themselves and there's no one else to look after them for you, then your caring for them can serve to cultivate merit and perfections for the time being.

Venerable Ananda is an example. He is unlike other monks. He took care of and served the Buddha for twenty-five years. He only attained a stream entry (*sotāpana*) during the time that he was the Buddha's attendant. But other monks, who didn't have such a responsibility, went on to attain enlightenment very quickly after ordaining; they listened to the Buddha's Dhamma and practised on their own in the forest. It depends on each individual's path. But Venerable Ananda also benefited a lot from being around the Buddha and constantly hearing his teachings. He attained his own enlightenment only three months after the Buddha passed away.

So don't think that taking care of your parents is an obstacle. Think of it as a path that you must take for the time being. This will give you determination and confidence in your own destination. It is better than acting prematurely. Do you understand? If you were to do something prematurely, you could end up being worse off or with nothing.

Wherever you are, you can practise there and then. The only thing that varies is how much you can gain from it. So don't worry. Doing good deeds regardless of place and time will lead you to where you want to be.

If you don't have other options, then you must carry on with it. But if you do have a better alternative, why wouldn't you take it? For example, if there are two traffic routes, one is very congested and time-consuming whereas the other is not, wouldn't you take the latter? But you must take what's given if you don't have any other options.

You can practise regardless of the conditions. It is just a matter of progress. Sometimes you just have to bear with it when there's no other option. If there's still an obligation that you can't free yourself from, then you just have to accept it for the time being. But that doesn't mean you can't do anything. You can still meditate and read Dhamma books.

Taking care of your parents isn't an around-the-clock job. When you have already fed them and happen to have some free time, you can read Dhamma books or meditate. It might not be as intense as practising at a monastery, but you're still doing what you can.

It's like being stuck in traffic and there's no other route, so you just have to stick to it for the time being. Once there's a better route, then take it. Each of our paths is completely different. I am not sure if it's because of my merit or what, but I just happened to have a favourable option without planning it out beforehand.





*Your suffering is not due to your body,
but to your mind—thinking and holding
fast to the idea that your body is you
and belongs to you.*

We need to resort to Buddhism to make us aware that nothing belongs to us. Even our own physical bodies are not ours. One day they too will return to their original elements of earth, water, wind, and fire. In the end, your body will disintegrate into earth, water, wind, and fire. But for now, you can still make use of it in two ways: worldly and Dhamma. If you're lucky enough to have come across Buddhism, then you can make use of your body in a Dhamma way—liberating your mind and ending the endless cycle of rebirth and death. If you haven't come across Buddhism, then you'd only be able to make use of your body in a worldly way—seeking worldly pleasures through it.

The pleasures that come from material things are accompanied by suffering (*dukkha*). When you die, you'll be reborn and repeat it again and again. This endless cycle will continue on until there is a sense of wisdom (*paññā*), either through learning from someone else or from your own reflection. In most cases, you'll learn by listening to someone wiser.

So you're very lucky to have come across Buddhism. Having heard these things makes you aware and reflect. Some people may become disenchanted with the worldly way and develop wisdom through their own contemplation. They eventually become enlightened. This is all due to their own thinking and problem-solving, that is, without anyone to teach them because it is not something that can be taught.

The Buddha, who wanted to liberate himself from all suffering, also didn't have anyone to teach him. You can at best teach someone how to meditate. It will make your mind calm and happy, without any discontent during absorption (*samādhi*). But once you withdraw from it, your mind will start thinking about things, which eventually turn into suffering. That's why the Buddha needed to find a way to overcome this sense of suffering.

At first, the Buddha thought that the body was the cause of the suffering, so he let go of his body by not eating, which wasn't the right solution. Your suffering is not due to your body, but to your mind—thinking and holding fast to the idea that your body is you and belongs to you. So you have to be able to separate your mind from your body, which can be done by letting your body be and take its own course.

Do take care of your body. But let it be, should anything happen to it. This is to prepare yourself in advance that you will age, get ill, and die. But while you're not ill, old, or dying, then you don't need to do anything.

While you're still not free from suffering, you can then make use of your body to practise Dhamma. Knowing that you can't avoid death will give you a sense of courage. You can get ordained to become a monk or a nun and live in a forest, because you are no longer afraid of dying—knowing that no matter what you will die one day.

So you can make use of your body before you die by liberating your mind from the cycle of rebirth and death. Once you're aware of death, you can use it to teach and remind yourself. It will give you the courage to give up your worldly possessions, prestige, and all kinds of things. You'll then be able to get ordained and search for liberation from all the suffering that comes from the three kinds of craving (*taṇhā*).

For Buddhists, this is the essence. You're lucky to not have to figure it all out for yourself. You don't need to stumble your way through as you already have the Buddha as your guide. If you were lost in a forest, then you wouldn't be in so much trouble because there's someone who knows the way out to guide you.

The Buddha was also once lost in the wilderness but he managed to find his way out. So he created a way out of suffering for us: giving (*dāna*), precepts (*sīla*), and cultivation through practice (*bhāvanā*). This is the only way out; there is no other way. Once you have come across it, you should hold fast to it. Keep on practising and making merit.

Don't be stingy with your spare money and wealth. You can't take them with you when you die. They are to be used, and not to be saved. They're not for you to serve them—to safeguard them. They should serve you—for you to use them to make merit and give, so that you become less attached to them. If you don't, then you'll be all concerned about and attached to them. Losing them will make you suffer.

But if you use them to make merit through giving, to help others, and to make society more peaceful, then you'll be happy. You will no longer be burdened by your money and wealth. You'll have less greed because you won't see the point in making money and being rich. When you have more than you need, you'll distribute them anyway. You'll have more free time as you won't need to strive to make more money once you have enough. You'll end up with more time for meditation practice.

In the beginning, you can meditate at home because you're still a lay person. But once you reap the results from your practice, you'll see that the happiness from your practice is much more worthwhile than that from money and wealth, from prestige, and so on. So you'll want to practise more and cut down other obligations. You'll only work to afford what is necessary—to make enough to feed and support yourself and meet the basic necessities. You'd rather spend your spare time on walking and sitting meditation, reading Dhamma books, visiting and paying respect to respectable teachers, and going on retreats at different monasteries.

Continuing to do such things will help you cut down on other obligations; it will eventually lead you to becoming ordained. You will no longer find any happiness in lay life, because there's so much hassle at home. There's always something going on—all the nonsense that has to do with craving and desire of various people. If they don't get what they want, then they get angry and upset. So you resolve to give up and let whoever take whatever they want. You don't want anything or to be a part of it. You only want to be yourself. And the only thing you want is time—to be on your own so that you can cultivate giving, precepts, and practice.





Having been born as a human is your best chance. If you were born as an animal, or a bird, you wouldn't be able to practise. You'd only be able to live off Buddhism at most.

Please have confidence in Buddhism. Carry on practising. Having been born as a human is your best chance.

If you were born as an animal, or a bird, you wouldn't be able to practise. You'd only be able to live off Buddhism at most. Since you're not a bird but a human—you have the intellect to learn about Buddhism and its teachings, you should then try to put what you've learnt into practice.







*Have you ever had enough?
Have you ever felt truly satisfied?
Haven't you done enough?
You've seen enough movies and shows.
You've been to enough parties.
You've travelled around
and been to enough places.
Perhaps it is time to stop.*







2

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Samana

Monastics:

Those who go against the flow



Everyone in this world searches for happiness according to each individual's mental capacity...

Those with wisdom will notice that there should be a kind of happiness that does not depend on other things or people.

Everyone in this world searches for happiness according to each individual's mental capacity—wisdom. Those with the lowest capacity are the ones with vices, who drink, club, and gamble. They are the ones who hang out with bad companions—those who are lazy and who seek happiness by causing other people trouble. Those with higher capacities are humans and angels (*devas*). They seek happiness from making merit and giving and keeping precepts—a higher level of happiness.

Those who seek an even higher form of happiness can discern the drawbacks of physical and sensual pleasures (*kāma-sukha*). They realise that sensual pleasures are bound to suffering. For instance, having a partner may seem to be fulfilling in the beginning, but it can turn into suffering once your partner dies or after breaking up.

Those with wisdom will notice that there should be a kind of happiness that does not depend on other things or people. So they learn from, and search for it, through sages. They find out that such a happiness comes from peace of mind. And so they focus on cultivation through restraints while practising in the wilderness, monasteries, and meditation centres. This is in order to restrain their eyes, ears, noses, tongues, and bodies from coming into contact with, and seeking pleasures from forms, sounds, odour, tastes, and touch.



‘For I have found and eradicated the causes of new becoming and birth—the three kinds of craving—and so they can no longer create any more becoming and birth for me.’

• *The Buddha*

If you've already given away all you have, there's then no more concern. You won't need to worry about giving because there is nothing more to give. As a monk, you only have eight possessions, or the eight monastic requisites (*parikhāra*). You only have two remaining duties: to maintain your precepts and to cultivate your mind through meditation practice (*bhāvanā*). In other words, you are to work on precepts (*sila*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Precepts are the 227 monastic rules (*Dhamma-Vinaya*). You have to observe them. They are to help tame your defilements, just like a rope that reins in your craving and desire. It will be difficult to rein your defilements back in, once you've loosened your grip on them. Keeping a tight rein on them will allow you to be in control. The precepts will help you calm your mind more easily than those without.

Once you've gained *samādhi*, you'll understand the three marks of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*): impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). You'll have the strength to relinquish, let go, and leave be. Without concentration, you won't be able to relinquish your fear of dying even when you're fully aware that you will have to die. You can't let go of the fear due to the lack of your mental support—tranquility.

If you've already established your mental ground—having gained peace, you'll then know that it doesn't really matter when your body dies. You'll know that when you've calmed your mind, it won't be aware of, or too concerned about, your body. Whatever happens to your body, it won't concern your mind.

Death is like falling asleep. When your body dies, you won't be aware of it. There's no time to panic. You might panic at most just before you die. You might awake from your sleep for two seconds and then it will pass.

That's why you have to cultivate giving, precepts, and practice. It is the only way that will lead you to liberation from all suffering. They are to help you get rid of the three kinds of craving: craving for sensual pleasure (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for being (*bhāva-taṇhā*), and craving for non-existence (*vibhāva-taṇhā*).

If you can rid yourself of all these cravings, your mind will be pure and liberated. There won't be any more causes in your mind to create becoming (*bhava*) and birth (*jāti*). The Buddha once said: 'For I have found and eradicated the causes of new becoming and birth—the three kinds of craving—and so they can no longer create any more becoming and birth for me.'

Therefore, those who have been born and come across Buddhism are really lucky. To be born as a human is by chance. Humans can usually bear one child at a time in a year. A couple may at most have two to three children. It is unlike animals, which can bear nine to ten offsprings at a time. Fish reproduce their offsprings by school. Therefore, there is a much higher chance to be born as an animal than as a human. In addition, you also have to have the precepts intact in order to be born as a human. There is no way to be born as a human if you don't keep your precepts. It's clear that you all have cultivated merit through giving and keeping the precepts in your previous life, thus being born as a human.

So you shouldn't waste your past merit, or good deeds. You should create new and more merit and virtue so that you'll improve your status: from being an ordinary person to a heavenly being (*deva*), to a pure abode (*brahmā*) and to a noble being, respectively.

This can only be accomplished through the cultivation of giving, keeping the precepts, and practising meditation. Just keep doing it no matter what. Don't get attached to, or care too much about, your life or anything else. The Buddha once said: 'Give up your possessions to save your organs. Give up your organs to save your life. Give up your life to save the Dhamma. For it is only the Dhamma that will lead you to peace and happiness and to liberation from all suffering.'



You shouldn't really cling on or get attached to anything. You have to accept that we all have our own choices. If you need to be involved with someone, you should focus on loving-kindness (mettā), that is, to support one another without overdoing it.

My father didn't want me to ordain, but I still managed to. It really depends on each individual's merit and past actions. Some parents get upset with their son's ordination whereas some are happy. It has to do with the parents' minds and how much merit they have. If the parents have a lot of merit and understand the concept of it, they'll be happy for anyone who ordains. Those parents without merit won't understand it. When they see their own child ordain, they get really upset. They wonder why their child doesn't want to lead a worldly life. They end up thinking about all sorts of things. It all comes down to each individual's merit and past actions.

You shouldn't really cling on or get attached to anything. You have to accept that we all have our own choices. If you need to be involved with someone, you should focus on loving-kindness (*mettā*), that is, to support one another without overdoing it.

For instance, you may raise and take care of your child, but once he's grown you have to let him go and live his own life. If you want him to ordain but he doesn't want to, then you'll get really upset. You have to accept that it is his decision and business. You have already given him a chance but if he doesn't want it, then there's nothing you can do.

It is like giving a sum of money to your child and he doesn't want it—why would you get upset? If he doesn't want it, then that is his business. Whatever he wants to do or wherever he wants to go is his choice. To let him live his own life is, in fact, a form of mettā—kindness and goodwill. It is better than to force him to do the things that you want, which is not in any way loving nor kind. Instead, it will only turn into resentment. Forcing him to do something would only upset him and may cause quarrels and hatred.

You have to bear in mind that you're like a steerer. You're like a guide who gets your child across from one side of the river to the other. There's nothing you can do if your child wants to jump off the boat in the middle of the river.

Your duty is to teach your child: what is right and what is wrong. This is so that he can rely on himself. That's all you can do. If he chooses to go the right way, then it is his merit. If he doesn't, then it is his own doing. No one can control someone else's mind. We all have to part and die from one another eventually. Once you're dead, who will be in charge of him? He will need to go on his own no matter what.





Women are not forbidden nor frowned upon when it comes to ordination... The Buddha wanted monks to be in charge of nuns, as men were more physically able than women in the past. It is unlike today, where there can be a female president.

Women are not forbidden nor frowned upon when it comes to ordination. Your mother, in fact, is a woman. However, it is much riskier and more unsafe for women to roam around and practise in a forest. Therefore, there are certain conditions and rules for them. For instance, nuns (*bhikkhuni*) must stay in a monastery where there are monks; they can't stay just by themselves in a monastery. They also have to ask for precepts from monks every fortnight. They have to welcome any admonishment from, and can't have more authority than, monks.

The Buddha wanted monks to be in charge of nuns, as men were more physically able than women in the past. It is unlike today, where there can be a female president. There are many amenities in today's society, so you simply rely on your brain power. In the past, you needed to rely more on physical strength. Fighting a war involved riding horses, risking one's life, and killing; it depended very much on natural physique.



People who enjoy meditation will think that being a monk is the best thing. The Buddha really set out this path as there is no other obligations for monks... The only duty for monks is to cultivate the Dhamma in their hearts.

I was lucky that I didn't have any obligations when I graduated from university. I didn't have a proper job yet. The job that I had wasn't what I wanted to do but I had to do it to earn my living. So I didn't care about it when I had to quit.

When I ordained, I also didn't have any money or possession, so there was nothing to regret. So it was quite an easy decision as I was carefree—having gained and collected nothing—and I had nothing to lose. There were no concerns: nothing to hold me back to a lay lifestyle. With my conviction that it was the right path—one on which I would be able to practise fully—there was only hope that lay ahead.

People who enjoy meditation will think that being a monk is the best thing. The Buddha really set out this path as there is no other obligations for monks. If you look into what the Buddha taught, you'll see that he taught us to only focus on cultivation through practice: to develop and maintain precepts, concentration, wisdom and nothing else.

But these days, monks don't seem to heed his words or the right thing anyway. They have so many obligations, including group chanting and building things. All these things weren't the main duty during the Buddha's time; the main duty for monks was cultivation through practice. The Buddha never built a monastery, not even one. If it were a monk's duty, who would be able to compete with him? He could have built as many monasteries as he liked, but it was not for monks to do. The only duty for monks is to cultivate the Dhamma in their hearts.

Monks are to live rough or make do with whatever is available. If nobody is willing to build a hut for you, the Buddha taught us to reside under a tree, in an abandoned place, or in a quiet and private cave. These are the kind of places that monks should live in. Robes are also to be sewn from left-over garments and frayed pieces and then dyed.

However, it is very different these days. Nowadays, monks and novices are very caught up in materialistic things and rituals to the extent that they've forgotten the essence of Buddhism. It is rather difficult for anyone's mind to penetrate the true Dhamma; it is impossible without real determination and proper understanding.

Monks don't even know why they ordain to begin with these days. They ordain as a rite of passage or as a custom. They may enjoy the lifestyle and stay on as monks, thinking that they would contribute by building things. But they don't really study or practise. They may study only to memorise certain things to be able to parrot them to others. They may even reach the highest level of study but never put it into practice themselves. The knowledge remains just on a piece of paper, nothing more than a certificate. Within their hearts remain all the defilements.





Your mind is like a pond. If someone gets in it to bathe or play, the water will get muddy and not be still.

When your mind comes in contact with various forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and touch, it will waver constantly.

Many of those who ordained here don't know about the way of practising monks, or *kammaṭṭhāna* monks. Most of them ordained as a rite of passage. When they see monks living up here, they also want to give it a try. But they don't really know why these monks stay up here or what they do.

So when they come up, they don't really meditate. They end up chatting and drinking tea and coffee. Or they go around bothering those who want peace and quiet. Those who really are focussed on meditation will not want to get involved or socialise with anyone. When you're alone in a place like this, there will be nothing to ruffle your mind.

Your mind is like a pond. If someone gets in it to bathe or play, the water will get muddy and not be still. When your mind comes in contact with various forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and touch, it will waver constantly. When it wavers, it won't be still. It won't realise the bliss and the sublime of tranquility. It won't be able to discern the fulfilment and contentment that arise from the mental cultivation through meditation practice.



For beginners, they don't really need the peace and quiet of a place like this just yet. There just needs to be privacy so that nobody disturbs them.

Many new monks are eager to leave and practise elsewhere. They don't want to study or learn anything. They want to do austere practices (*dhutaṅga*) by going on such a trip right away without having learnt any basics. Their minds aren't yet calm and they don't really know what meditation practice is. They won't meditate in a forest—ending up doing everything but practising. I just want to preserve the peace and quiet of this place.

For beginners, they don't really need the peace and quiet of a place like this just yet. There just needs to be privacy so that nobody disturbs them. They can make do with just a room in which they can sit and calm their minds.

However, there are many places you can go practise if you really want peace and quiet. You have to find them yourself. All of you will have to find a place and a teacher when it is time.



When you're fasting, you'll get hungry... Having to fight against the suffering from thinking about food will force you to keep practising. Your mind will calm down with meditation.

Right after I ordained, I got a chance to really practise. I was very fortunate to have found it at the very first monastery that I went to. It was a place that was solely dedicated to Dhamma practice, not to mention the strictness. It was very intense, which helped me a lot. I thought my practice was already intense, but compared to other monks there, I realised that it wasn't at all.

I thought that having one meal a day was already an achievement. But once I got to Wat Pa Baan Taad, I noticed that a monk sitting next to me would disappear for several days at a time. So I asked people where he had gone to—whether he had gone home? They said no and that he was fasting. Seeing that he could fast prompted me to try fasting myself. It turned out that fasting was really conducive to my practice.

When you're fasting, you'll get hungry. And when you're hungry, you'll have to resort to meditation practice to alleviate your hunger. Your hunger is partly due to your thoughts (*saṅkhāra*). When your mind is prone to think about food, you'll salivate just thinking about it—you'll feel hungry, and so will your mind. When your body isn't hungry but your mind is, it is your mind that suffers. When you feel hungry, you need to start meditating right away. Once your mind is calm, your hunger will fade away.

So there are two types of hunger: physical and mental. Your physical hunger is not as severe as your mental one. When you're not meditating, your mind will proliferate all these thoughts about food, which are very tormenting and make you really hungry. But when your mind is calm, that tormenting feeling just disappears. There will only be a sense of lightness—your empty stomach might make you feel slightly lethargic. But it is definitely not as tormenting as the mental craving.

Fasting is a way to make you constantly meditate. If you don't, you'll end up thinking about food. Fasting, therefore, benefits a meditation practice in many ways.

Before I began fasting, I would feel hungry in the evenings as my mind would think about food. After having tried fasting for a while, my mind stopped proliferating about food. Having gone three or four days without food made me realise that foregoing a supper isn't such a big deal, and so it became very easy.

Fasting for three or four days makes just about anything tasty, including plain rice. It makes it a lot easier in terms of eating—being less picky. It also keeps you alert while meditating and not lazy, which is contrary to eating regular meals. Having eaten and feeling satisfied will make you less inclined to meditate and more inclined to lie down. So if fasting suits you, it can be really conducive to your practice.

To fast while practising will make you determined to meditate. Having to fight against the suffering from thinking about food will force you to keep practising. Your mind will calm down with meditation. If you keep doing it, you'll become used to and good at practising. So then you can meditate without any condition.





There are many ways to keep yourself awake while meditating. You have to see which suits you most.

One way to help with sleepiness while meditating is to eat moderately. Each individual's sense of moderation varies. Some people don't eat after midday. Some only eat one meal a day. And some may fast for three days without eating solid foods and only consume juices or other supplements, such as milk. These may cure sleepiness.

However, in the Buddhist Canon (*Tipiṭaka*), the Buddha said to get up and do walking meditation if you're getting sleepy while sitting in meditation. If walking meditation alone doesn't work, you should try walking in scary places. Some respectable teachers did their walking meditation (*caṅkama*) where there were tigers. That way, you will stay alert. Sitting in meditation in scary places will also keep you alert. Some people do their sitting meditation in cemeteries to keep them awake.

There are many ways to keep yourself awake while meditating. You have to see which suits you most. If it doesn't, you may end up losing your way. For instance, if you get scared easily and choose to sit in meditation in a cemetery, you may end up losing your mind.



*Just focus on only one word,
‘Buddho’, while meditating. There is
no need to doubt to waste your time.*

Those who seek peace of mind need to avoid sensual pleasures; they'll be able to calm their minds more easily during mediation. You have to be strong because sensory desire (*kāma-chanda*) is one of the five hindrances (*pañcānīvaraṇani*)—mental factors that hinder progress in meditation. They act as barriers that obstruct your mind from entering a mental state of calm.

Aside from sensory desire, there is also the hindering factor of doubt (*vicikicchā*). When you meditate, a doubt will arise making you question: the effectiveness of the technique of reciting 'Buddho' or the existence of the Buddha, his teachings, and his noble disciples. You question if meditation will really calm your mind. These doubts will make you hesitant and distracted during your meditation. It will hamper your focus, determination, and conviction and prevent you from making progress.

When there is doubt, you'll need to listen to those with experience to guarantee the result—encouraging you to keep on reciting 'Buddho' and ensuring the wonderful result. Hearing it from someone who is respectable and trustworthy will help eliminate your doubts.

Just focus on only one word, 'Buddho', while meditating. There is no need to doubt to waste your time. Use mindfulness to keep you focussed and soon enough, the word 'Buddho' will get you through the five hindrances and into the state of mental calm.

When it comes to sloth-torpor (*thina-middha*), you'll need to regulate your eating and food intake. Don't overconsume. Or go to scary places to keep you alert and awake, such as cemeteries or the wilderness.

Staying at monasteries is to train yourself to live rough and minimally. When I stayed at Wat Pa Baan Taad, I just made do with whatever they provided, in terms of food and living arrangements. When there was spare time, I helped out with communal chores—cleaning toilets, sweeping, etc. These activities are often shunned by people with ambition. But you're here to go against the grain of your mental defilements.

The defilements often push you to strive for wealth and prestige. But you're here to train yourself to be poor and without any social ranking—to make yourself like a rag that can be used by anyone and for anything. You have to be able to clean toilets, wash dishes and spittoons, and do anything as long as it isn't immoral or doesn't trouble anyone.





*To abstain from all evil.
To cultivate what is wholesome.
And to purify one's mind.*

When you sit and listen to a Dhamma talk by any respectable teacher, you should remain in one posture until he finishes his talk. If you really pay attention to the talk and your mind is focussed on listening, then the pain won't be intolerable.

But if you don't stay focussed on listening and instead pay attention to the pain, it will worsen. Your mind will proliferate and the pain will increase just like enlarging an image. When your mind is aversive to it, the pain will intensify. But if your mind is at ease, like listening to music or playing cards, you can sit all night and won't feel a thing because you enjoy it.

I was lucky that I didn't have a lot of questions or problems with my practice. Listening to Luangta Mahā Boowa's Dhamma talks was enough for me to get by. At the time, he would give Dhamma talks quite often. Every four or five days he would call a meeting to give us a lecture on Dhamma. So I tried to learn and make the most from his talks.

He'd usually make his Dhamma talk into two sessions. In the first session, he'd discuss things in general. In the second session, he'd talk about his practice: how he managed to sit in meditation all night, how he fought his own fear, and how he managed to resolve issues at the time. He'd just sit and talk to us while chewing on his betel nut.

You'd gain knowledge on Dhamma or get answers to your questions mostly while giving him a massage. If you got a chance to serve him, such as being his attendant, you'd get a lot of opportunities. Being around him and attending to his needs is like being in a boxing ring—your opponent constantly seeks to attack you and so you have to always be on guard. It requires you to be mindful and sharp at all times.

But if you're not around him to attend to his needs, then you're playing the audience role, i.e., just watching and observing. You won't have him to help push you in terms of the Dhamma and its practice. If you're able to practise on your own, then you won't need to rely on him to push you. But if you get a chance to be around him, then it is a good opportunity just like Venerable Ananda, who got to be the Buddha's close attendant and managed to learn a lot from it. But this wasn't the case for everyone since there was only one Buddha with lots of disciples. So it depended on whom he would consider and give a chance to.

It is, however, not necessary that all the disciples have to be around their teachers or become their attendants. There are those who weren't around or close to the Buddha and other respectable teachers and still managed to become enlightened.

There was a lay person who approached the Buddha during his alms round and asked for a Dhamma talk. The Buddha told him that it wasn't appropriate to do so then, but he insisted and pleaded with the Buddha. So the Buddha just briefly told him: reflect on the voidness of everything—that there is no essence to anything. The lay person took the Buddha's teaching into consideration and felt compelled to ordain. So he prepared his monk's requisites, but he was killed by a bull on his way. The Buddha's instruction to build a stupa to contain his ashes after his cremation shows that he was enlightened.

We all have accumulated varying amounts of merit (*puñña*) and perfections (*pāramī*) in the past. Some were always around the Buddha but didn't become enlightened. Some even turned into the Buddha's enemies, such as *Devadatta*. Devadatta was conceited—after gaining special abilities through concentration, he stopped developing his wisdom. He let his defilements take charge of himself and became consumed in his own abilities and self-importance, causing him to want to take over the Buddha's role.

Devadatta got upset and angry from the Buddha's rejection, and so he committed some bad deeds. He tried to kill the Buddha three times but didn't succeed, and he fell into a sink hole in the end. Due to the large amount of merit and virtue he had done, the Buddha predicted that Devadatta would become a *pacceka-buddha*, or a solitarily enlightened one, after having paid for all his bad deeds in hell.

Therefore, all the merit Devadatta had done didn't disappear, even if he didn't get to benefit from it during his lifetime. The fact that he was ordained by the Buddha and learnt about and practised the Dhamma was a result of his perfections, which were thwarted by his bad deeds. So he had to repay for his bad deeds first before he could reap his merit and rest in peace.

One can't deny the results of one's good and bad actions; it is only a matter of time. Don't be discouraged. Don't think that you have gained nothing from your effort and cultivation. It may be that the merit you've done is still not quite enough or it is not yet the right time to yield its results. It may be due to timing that the bad deeds you have done still outweigh the good deeds. So it seems that you always end up with mishaps. You just have to accept that they may be due to your past actions.

You can't change what you have done in the past—the results of both good and bad actions. It is only a matter of time when it comes to reaping them. Your duty is: to abstain from all evil, to cultivate what is wholesome, and to purify your mind. This is the gist of all the Buddhas' teachings. This is the Paṭimokkha Exhortation (*Ovāda-paṭimokkha*) that was given on *Māgha-pūjā*:

To abstain from all evil. To cultivate what is wholesome. And to purify one's mind.

This is the teaching of all the Buddhas. So there is no need to wait for the coming of *Buddha Ariya Metteyya*; he will teach the same thing as the Buddha, the same as what you're hearing now.

If you don't practise meditation, no matter how many Buddha Ariya Metteyya you come across, you still won't practise. It all comes down to you, and not your teacher.

All the respectable teachers have already done their part. It all comes down to you whether you're ready to undertake it or not. So you have to make an effort to follow this path—try to let go of worldly pleasures. Whatever you can cut down, then do so. Whatever you can live without, then do so. You have to forego, practise, and sustain your effort. Forego anything that is futile or harmful. Cultivate anything that is beneficial. You have to do both of these things and they will eventually guide you or lead you to it.

Your gender and age do not matter. What matters is your action, which is the main cause and condition. If it isn't so, both monks and nuns won't have become enlightened. It all depends on your practice.

Stay determined. Be confident in the right path you've chosen. Keep up with your effort. Make as much effort as possible. And the good results will follow.





All of the Buddha's teachings—84,000 in total—lead to one thing: suffering and the cessation of suffering. It is not unlike water in the oceans: no matter how expansive the oceans may be, the water still tastes the same—salty.

Listening to Dhamma talks while doing your walking meditation is considered listening to the Dhamma. Once you know how to contemplate and reflect on things, you won't need to listen to Dhamma talks. Your own Dhamma will support you. Once your mind is inclined to contemplate things in accordance with the Dhamma, you won't have to listen to someone else's Dhamma. But for now, you still have to rely on someone else to conjure the Dhamma in your heart first.

Luangpu Mun used to live by himself. He said he would listen to the Dhamma at all times, because his mind would lean towards it and so his thoughts would turn into Dhamma. But if you still think in worldly ways—those of wandering (*saṃsāra*) and defilements (*kilesas*), you will then need to resort to the Dhamma to prevent them by listening to the Dhamma talks given by others.

When you listen, you have to make sure that you fully understand. When there's understanding, it will stay with you or in your heart. You'll start thinking in line with what you've heard. When you're able to think on your own, you won't then really need to listen so much, because you'll be more inclined to think on your own than to listen.

The Buddha compared the Dhamma from listening to someone else as water in a jar, whereas the Dhamma that arises from your own mind and contemplation is like an immense amount of water in an ocean.

But first, you have to rely on the wisdom of respectable teachers to motivate you as you don't yet know how to cultivate your own. However, whether you gain something from them depends mainly on your meditation practice. If you have yet to gain concentration, your defilements will be overpowering.

It is like anaesthetising a patient before an operation: without anaesthesia, the patient will scream and move, making it difficult to perform the operation. But with anaesthesia, the patient will be unconscious and still, making it easy for the doctor to operate.

It is the same with contemplating Dhamma. If your defilements are still active, they will intervene after a short while of contemplation. They will obstruct, oppose, and trick you into thinking about something else.

In order to gain substantial results from your cultivation of wisdom, you will first need to gain concentration (*samādhi*). It will then result in experiential wisdom (*bhāvanā-maya-paññā*).

As for the wisdom derived from listening to Dhamma talks or thinking, it does not require so much concentration. Just as you're listening to today's Dhamma talk, it doesn't require a lot of concentration. You just need to have enough concentration to focus on listening and you'll gain some benefits from it. It won't yet turn into experiential wisdom, which is gained through cultivation.

Experiential wisdom will arise from having gained concentration, or *samādhi*. You will have taken into consideration the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self characteristics that are inherent in forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and touch. You will have contemplated the nature of body, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness so consistently—your awareness becomes uninterrupted—to the point where these aggregates become interconnected and all encompassing.

It will be the same as how you might have noticed that all of the Buddha’s teachings are, in fact, interrelated. The development of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) aligns with the Four Noble Truths (*Cattāri-ariyasaccāni*). The Four Noble Truths, in turn, align with the three marks of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*)—they all come together. You’ll understand and see how the pieces all come together to form a big picture. At the moment, you still see it as individual pieces, not yet together to form a larger whole.

But once you’ve gained samādhi and have kept contemplating, you’ll discern the big picture. You’ll appreciate it. All of the Buddha’s teachings—84,000 in total—lead to one thing: suffering and the cessation of suffering. It is not unlike water in the oceans: no matter how expansive the oceans may be, the water still tastes the same—salty. No matter how many teachings there are, they all point towards suffering and the cessation of suffering—the Four Noble Truths.

In the beginning, if you don’t yet know how to derive this wisdom, you have to rely on listening to Dhamma talks. You’re very fortunate that you have all this equipment these days—to have listening devices that are easy and convenient to use. It is a matter of how you listen to the Dhamma talks. There are two ways: you can just hear but not understand them, like a ladle that sits in a pot of soup. Or you can listen and absorb the content like tasting soup with your tongue. You don’t need to understand everything, but you should understand some of it. If you don’t understand anything you’ve listened to, then it is useless.



Many respectable teachers often tell you to think of the Buddha and other meditation masters when you feel discouraged. They are just like you—having been ordinary people before.

According to many Dhamma books, many respectable teachers often tell you to think of the Buddha and other meditation masters when you feel discouraged. They are just like you—having been ordinary people before. They also had to fight against their own minds. You should look to their practice to see how they managed to get through. All respectable teachers teach you to carry on and not give in or give up. You may take it easy sometimes; you don't need to push yourself everyday. You may take a break sometimes. But you shouldn't get carried away and end up doing something else entirely.

Luangta Mahā Boowa once told me that he used to be able to get into a state of calm through meditation in the beginning, before he even had a teacher. At that time he was alone and so he was making canopies (*klot*) for about three months. While he was making them, he didn't get to meditate and so his mind was unruly by the time he finished them. No matter how he tried, he couldn't calm his mind to the level that it was before. He had forgotten how to calm his mind.

Whenever he meditated, he would think about his former state of calm. He ended up feeling discouraged and upset from not being able to attain it. However, he figured out that he should do whatever he used to practise. So he started to solely recite 'Buddho' again for three or four days. He didn't think about anything else whatsoever. He only thought of 'Buddho' in the four meditating postures: standing, walking, sitting, and lying down. As he was alone and did not interact with anyone, when the mind constantly focussed on 'Buddho', it calmed down very quickly.



If you have to think, only think of what is necessary. You still need to think. When you're walking somewhere, just be aware of what is in front of you... Just be present where you are. That's all there is to it. Don't think about other things to disrupt your mind.

Reciting ‘*Buddho*’ frequently can be useful in certain situations. When you’re sleepy, you can recite it more continually. You can do this too when your mind is distracted. But if you’re not mindful, it doesn’t matter how repeatedly you recite it, your mind will still go astray.

So you have to train yourself to maintain mindfulness. You can’t avoid it. Without developing mindfulness, you’ll never make good progress in meditation practice. It won’t really work if you think that you can just maintain mindfulness during your sitting meditation. You have to be mindful at all times, no matter where you are and what you do.

The term—mindfulness (*sati*)—means to be present in this particular place and moment. It means to not think about the past or the future, no matter how immediate or distant. It means to be here and now—present with whatever you’re doing. You don’t need to think about other things. When you’re listening, only focus on listening. Don’t think about other things in order to benefit from listening.

If you keep thinking about other things while listening, it won’t really make sense. Whatever you’re listening to will merely be heard but not properly understood. You won’t be able to grasp it or know how things all come together. If there’s no mindfulness to control your mind, you won’t stop yourself from thinking about things.

Listening to a Dhamma talk from someone who is wise, skilful, and interesting can be useful. If you listen to someone who doesn’t make sense, you’ll get bored. The person who gives a talk plays a part when it comes to listening to the Dhamma.

If the talk is logical, relevant, and practical, it can be very useful. If it is full of technical and formal terms, then it won't make much sense. It was much easier for me to understand what's written in English, that is, without formality. For instance, whether it was the Buddha or a beggar, the word 'to eat' would be used for both. I got confused by the technical and formal terms that I had never learnt. If you're familiar with the English language, it is easier to read Dhamma books in English.

When I first began practising, I was reciting the English translation of 'the Great Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness' (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*). I could memorise the whole sutta. When I sat in meditation, I would start off by reciting the sutta. When I first began to practise sitting meditation, I couldn't really become focussed, so I had to rely on reciting the sutta in English. It took me about forty minutes. I just kept reciting while sitting in meditation—contemplating the body and reflecting on feelings (*vedanā*) in English—until I could memorise it. It also gave rise to wisdom in me—making me aware of all the works that need to be done. So the recitation just became my meditation subject, instead of reciting 'Buddho' or watching the breath.

Chanting is also a form of meditation. When you use chanting as a meditation technique, you don't need to put your hands together or sit with your legs together. You can sit cross-legged—in the lotus position—just as when you're meditating and start chanting. Just carry on chanting and make sure you're mindful of it. You can start with '*Namo tassa*' to revere to the Buddha and then chant whichever discourse (*sutta*) you can. Keep chanting for a while and then you'll be able to sit in meditation for a long period of time.

If you recite ‘Buddho’ and keep getting distracted, you’ll start to feel aches and pain everywhere. But if you chant continuously for a little while, you won’t feel much pain because your mind is focussed on chanting and not paying attention to bodily sensations. When you finish chanting after half an hour or forty minutes, you’ll feel light and that’s when you carry on watching your breathing. Your mind will stay focussed by watching your in-breath and out-breath. Once it is with the breathing, your mind will gradually calm down and become more and more still. Just stay with that sense of stillness until your mind withdraws from it. When withdrawn, you can get up and do other things.

You have to be mindful when you’re getting up. Before getting up, make sure you’re aware of your action. Carry on cultivating mindfulness and practising the Establishing of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)—being aware of the four bodily postures, for instance. When it is time to come back to sitting, just continue to sit in meditation. Maintain your mindfulness at all times—sitting, walking, standing, and lying down. You can chant while walking if you like to avoid thinking about other things. You can chant in all of the four postures if you like.

Certain monks prefer using just the word ‘Buddho’ in all of the postures and activities—while sitting, walking, sweeping, going on alms round, and eating. That is, to constantly have ‘Buddho’ on your mind. Even if there might be some distractions here and there, there will still be more ‘Buddho’.

If you have to think, only think of what is necessary. You still need to think. When you’re walking somewhere, be aware of what is in front of you. When you’re eating or doing something, be present with it and keep reciting ‘Buddho’ on top of that. Your mind will calm down and become focussed. Defilements won’t be able to sneak in, or leak out, because there’s no form to stir up your mind. Your mind won’t think of other things—about doing and having other things. There’s no chance for your defilements to act out.

The mind can only think of one thing at a time by its nature. It may get distracted. While thinking about ‘Buddho’, it may jump to something else, just like the utility frequency. The alternating current (AC) of 60 Hz oscillates sixty cycles per second. The mind is much faster than that. That’s why you have to rely on mindfulness to keep it under control. Once you’ve established mindfulness, other aspects of Dhamma will follow, i.e., in terms of practice. Concentration, wisdom, and liberation will be the results that follow, respectively.

The Buddha said that mindfulness is such a great dhamma—virtue and mental quality, just like an elephant’s footprint that covers all of other animals’ footprints because of its size. Mindfulness is just the same; it is the greatest and most important of all. Without mindfulness, don’t even dare to hope for concentration, wisdom, and liberation. Mindfulness is the leader. So you should constantly develop mindfulness. It is something you can do but don’t.

Try to train and constantly remind yourself. Notice whether or not you’re being present in the moment—whether you’re being aware of yourself or distracted by other things. Sometimes nothing has happened yet, but you already get upset and start crying. Whatever will be, will be. Just be present where you are. That’s all there is to it. Don’t think about other things to disrupt your mind.

Keep on trying to be mindful. And your mind will be calm when you meditate. When you cultivate wisdom, you have to focus on the subject of contemplation. For example, a frequent reflection on birth, ageing, illness, and death will keep you mindful and focussed. You’ll also be able to expand your scope of contemplation—alternating between your own birth, ageing, illness, and death and those of others’. You’ll see that we are all bound to grow old, get ill, and die. You may actually come to appreciate and enjoy such a continual reflection.





Your mind can practise in all four postures. However, you shouldn't do so while lying down because it is too easy to fall asleep. Standing, walking, and sitting can all be used for meditation practice.

If you're practising like a lay person, it is not yet that necessary to do walking meditation because you're still not practising that much.

Walking meditation is for those who are practising like a professional or who are doing it full time. Practising monks, for instance, can't possibly sit all the time; their bodies need to change postures occasionally. Having to change postures, to only meditate while sitting wouldn't be enough. So they need to be able to carry on practising in various postures. They can recite '*Buddho*' while sitting and carry on doing so after getting up to walk.

Your mind can practise in all four postures. However, you shouldn't do so while lying down because it is too easy to fall asleep. Standing, walking, and sitting can all be used for meditation practice.

If you have to practise all around the clock, from waking up to sleeping, you won't be able to only do sitting meditation all day. You'll need to change your posture. When you sit for a long time, you'll feel aches and pain all over your body. So you have to change your posture, you have to get up and walk.

When you're walking, don't let your mind wander off to think about other things. You have to rein it in by reciting 'Buddho' continuously, for example.

There was one monk during the Buddha's time, who constantly recited 'Buddho' at all times. Whatever he did, he wouldn't stop reciting it. That's considered steady practice—consistent mental cultivation. When he awoke, he started reciting 'Buddho' until he fell asleep, and when he lay down, he also kept on reciting.

So all day long there was only one word, 'Buddho'. There might be times when he had to think about other things. For instance, when he met other people and had to talk to them, he would stop it for a while. But as soon as there was no need to talk or think about other things, he would get back on reciting 'Buddho'. It didn't matter if he was sweeping, washing his bowl, going on alms round, or doing other things, 'Buddho' was always on his mind.





You have to accept your physical pain and suffering. Don't be averse to them. The root cause of your mental suffering is your aversion, fear, and dislike of unpleasant sensations... You should, therefore, train yourself to appreciate suffering and hardship. Train yourself to fast. Don't be afraid of it. You won't die.

A contemplation of unpleasant sensations (*dukkha-vedanā*) can manifest in two ways. One is that the mind will become so focussed and enter into absorption or full concentration (*appanā-samādhi*). Your mind will not feel any bodily sensation; your body will completely become void. Your mind will become calm as if nothing happened. The other is that the mind is still fully aware of the five aggregates and sensations (*vedanā*), but it will be calm. Your mind will not be agitated, restless, distracted, or tormented. You have to keep practising—to find ways to reflect and see that these things are beyond your control.

You have to accept your physical pain and suffering. Don't be aversive to them. The root cause of your mental suffering is your aversion, fear, and dislike of unpleasant sensations.

If you learn to appreciate these sensations, you then won't be aversive to them. For instance, if you don't like a certain food, just keep eating it for a while. You'll grow accustomed to and learn to appreciate it. You're easily averse to any unfamiliar food. When you live abroad, you'll come across food that you've never seen or eaten before. You probably won't eat it if you have a choice.

Many Thai people tend to cook and eat Thai food among themselves; they refuse to eat Western food. However, I was too lazy to cook for myself. I just ate Western food, which was quite plain. Living in their country, I might as well eat like they do. I just got used to it eventually and grew to appreciate it. When I returned to Thailand, I had to seek Western food since I came to like it. I didn't appreciate it then, but I do now.

It is the same with sensations—we normally don't like pain. If you train yourself, you'll notice that something is missing when you don't feel it. It is just like people who are used to spicy food, they won't enjoy plain food. For those who aren't used to eating chilli, just one chilli will make them suffer and unable to finish their food. But if you keep training yourself to eat chilli, it will eventually become a habit. Once your mind can accept suffering, it will not suffer.

You should, therefore, train yourself to appreciate suffering and hardship. Train yourself to fast. Don't be afraid of it. You won't die. The Buddha fasted for forty-nine days and managed to survive. You have enough energy stored in your body. You'll be able to live without food, but not without water. Your body needs water and air. It is really not a big deal to fast for five or seven days.





To practise in order to surpass that sense of suffering (dukkha-vedanā) takes a lot of time and effort...

A sense of suffering arises with each sitting, so you have to keep doing it. Don't be discouraged.

To practise in order to surpass that sense of suffering (*dukkha-vedanā*) takes a lot of time and effort.

It is like digging a tunnel. You can only dig a few metres deep in a day, but you have to keep digging regularly and continuously in order to go deeper and eventually cut through. If you don't carry on regularly, whatever you've dug will erode and you will have to start from the beginning all over again.

It is the same with sitting meditation. A sense of suffering arises with each sitting, so you have to keep doing it. Don't be discouraged. Once you manage to get through, you won't feel any pain. You have to be diligent, especially as a monk, since you have a lot of time. Once you get through it, you'll feel wonderful.



*If you put up with sitting for a while,
the pain will go away eventually.
Your mind will become relaxed and
not fixated on it... Your body and mind
will be independent from one another.
Your mind will be aware that it's just
how the body is.*

The reason why monks have to live a rough life and eat minimally is so that we get used to physical pain and suffering.

For instance, practising in three postures—walking, standing, and sitting—without lying down is to train yourself to fight against physical pain and suffering. Eating one meal a day instead of three or fasting for three or four days in a row is to make your body suffer. It is to train your mind, just like training soldiers. If you train them in an air-conditioned room, they'll never be able to fight against the enemy. You have to train them outdoors in the woods and let them live rough. When there's a war, they'll have to fight in rough terrains, not in an air-conditioned environment.

It will take away your fear as you'll know that you're able to face and put up with physical pain. If you put up with sitting for a while, the pain will go away eventually. Your mind will become relaxed and not fixated on it. Your mind will be calm from not craving for anything. The severe physical pain will vanish completely. Even if it doesn't, it won't bother you. Your body and mind will be independent from one another. Your mind will be aware that it's just how the body is.



*If you practise or meditate a lot,
your concentration will be quite deep
and can happen in any posture.*

The term—*bhavanga* (ground of becoming)—can refer to two things, or two types of an inactive state of mind. One refers to sleeping whereas the other is a mental state of concentration (*samādhi*).

If it is the sleeping kind of *bhavanga*, you won't be conscious. You won't be aware that you're sleeping. It is like dozing off while driving, that is the sleeping kind of *bhavanga*.

But if it's the concentration kind, it will feel as if your mind has fallen into a hole and just remains still. You'll still be constantly mindful—being aware of the lightness and ease of your mind. There will be no thoughts or very few. So the concentration kind of *bhavanga* is a state of mental calm. Sometimes it is referred to as *bhavanga* and sometimes as tranquility or one-pointedness.

For example, if you keep reciting '*Buddho*', you'll reach a point where your mind becomes focussed. It is as if you've fallen into a hole or off a cliff, or when a plane suddenly drops due to a change in air pressure. Your mind will fade for a short while and then remain still. You'll still be fully conscious, just like you're sitting here and chatting. If you carry on chatting, your mind can also suddenly fade for a short while. It can also happen during a walking meditation.

If your mind is not active and thinking about things, it will drop into absorption and into calmness. Your mind is simply in full concentration. However, there are many levels of *samādhi* depending on the varying depth. If you practise or meditate a lot, your concentration will be quite deep and can happen in any posture.

In the beginning, you might need to rely on sitting meditation in order to get into absorption, because you still require the stillness of your physical body in order to calm your mind. But once your mind has established a certain level of calmness, your mind may fall into absorption during walking meditation.

Luangpu Chob, for example, used to do his ascetic walking/wandering during the night. He would hold a lantern in one hand and keep walking while reciting ‘Buddho’. And one time, he happened to run into a tiger. Once he saw the tiger, his mind suddenly dropped into absorption. The tiger vanished from his mind or perception. Once his mind withdrew from the absorption, the lantern had already gone out, but he was still holding it in his hand. This shows that his mind was fully concentrated for a certain period of time.

It is as if his body turned into a rock—standing still and his mind was void of his body. His mind was fully absorbed in whichever posture his body was in. His mind must have wavered when he saw the tiger, but he was able to maintain his mindfulness and so didn’t panic. Without mindfulness, he would have panicked and reacted to seeing the tiger. But he didn’t, because he managed to maintain his mindfulness and so his mind dropped into absorption and became fully concentrated.





Your body is constantly subject to changes from the moment you were born to this very moment. It will also continue to change until the end of your life... It is a misapprehension to think that your body is you and that it belongs to you. When in reality, it belongs to nature, just like the trees and leaves.

When your mind is getting very calm, you should then work on developing wisdom (*paññā*). You should contemplate your body and all sorts of things that make you suffer. You should try to address them through contemplation, and you'll see that delusions are what make you attached to things. When there's an attachment, then there is suffering due to the uncontrollable nature of things—not always going your way nor meeting your expectations and desires.

Everything is subject to change. But we often want things to remain as they are. All the good things should remain the way they are, which is not possible.

Your body is constantly subject to changes from the moment you were born to this very moment. It will also continue to change until the end of your life. If you keep reflecting on this, it will make you less attached to your body and more able to accept the reality. Your mind will be at ease and able to separate from your body. It will be able to discern that your body is not your mind, and that your mind is not your body. It is a misapprehension to think that your body is you and that it belongs to you. When in reality, it belongs to nature, just like the trees and leaves.

Your body is just like the trees and leaves. If you happen to like or grow fond of it, you'll then get upset when something happens to it. Why is it so? It's because you're attached to it. If there's no attachment, you won't feel anything when something happens to it. So the problem lies in your attachment. You have to accept the reality: you can't hold onto anything in this world and any attachment will only and readily make you suffer.



When you no longer have any work left to do, you may then wander off to wherever you like... Your wandering won't be because of delusion or out of desire... You have to complete all of your work before having fun.

When you aim for liberation and enlightenment through your practice, you'll have to rein in your mind to keep it inwards and calm. Once you withdraw from that calm state, you should then reflect on the three marks of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*) as well as forms (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), memories (*saññā*), thoughts (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

When you're free—after you've developed wisdom (*vipassanā*), and your mind has accumulated enough merit and perfections—you'll be able to visit the heavenly realms, just as the Buddha did to see his mother. Luangpu Mun also had visits from and conversations with heavenly beings. It shows that your mind can have access to all of the three realms (*tibhava*).

However, if you're aiming for liberation and enlightenment, then you shouldn't visit those realms because you'll become attached to them and end up wasting your time. When you start meditating, and you happen to have a visit from a heavenly being or your mind wanders to other realms, don't get carried away. You only need to let it happen, or experience it, once just so that you know it exists and how it is.

You shouldn't get carried away with it to the extent that it becomes a habit. You should focus on your body. Contemplate the thirty-two body parts and their foulness to discern the body's decomposition and impermanence. Reflect on it until you can let go of your body and become detached from it—you're no longer concerned with death. This is where you need to reach when practising for liberation and enlightenment.

When you no longer have any work left to do, you may then wander off to wherever you like. There will be no one to stop you, nor will any harm come to the mind that is liberated. Your wandering won't be because of delusion or out of desire. You can let your mind wander when you're free and there won't be any harm, but you have to finish your work first. You have to complete all of your work before having fun.





*With wisdom in your heart,
it will protect you from being reborn
in the lower realms.*

Having been born, you have likely committed both good and bad deeds. If you manage to gain concentration at the moment when you are about to die, you'll automatically be reborn in a good realm, just like skipping grades. So it is uncertain. If you've achieved any level of attainment, there's only one way to go. But it is not for certain with the achievement of just concentration (*samādhi*), because it is not transcendental (*lokuttara-dhamma*)—not permanent—unlike wisdom.

With wisdom in your heart, it will protect you from being reborn in the lower realms. It is like how stream-enterers will no longer be reborn in any realms lower than that of humans' (*apāya-bhūmi*), even if they have yet to repay bad deeds from their past. Those bad deeds will not be able to pull them to the lower realms.

Without having attained stream entry or other higher levels, i.e., just having mastered *samādhi*, you'll be subjected to hell realms first if you have committed any bad deeds. This was the case with *Devadatta*—he had already gained absorption and special abilities, but had not reached any stage of enlightenment.

Concentration thus does not guarantee that you won't be reborn in the lower realms, but transcendental wisdom—that of stream-enterers'—does. There was a monk who was very attached to his robe before his death. When he died, he was reborn as a moth living in his robe for seven days. This shows that he had not yet achieved any level of attainment. If he had, he wouldn't have been reborn as a moth or an animal. He would only have been reborn as a human or heavenly being and would have then attained enlightenment within seven births.

So concentration cannot guarantee you anything just yet. You can still be reborn in the lower realms. You can still be subject to endless cycles of rebirth and death.

Take former teachers of the Buddha for example. They both had cultivated absorption through meditation (*jhāna*), and they therefore were reborn in the realm of pure abodes (*brahmā*) after their death. But once their concentration deteriorated over time and their minds became more sullied, they were then reborn as heavenly beings (*devas*) and humans, respectively. They had to once again cultivate their merit and virtue and repay any bad deeds they might have done in the past.

With the cultivation of wisdom—discerning the three marks of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*) and the five aggregates (*khandhas*) that no permanent entity of self exists—you’ll be able to let go and become detached from the five aggregates. This is just like stream-enterers (*sotāpanna*), who can relinquish their belief in a self (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) by realising that none of the five aggregates is a permanent entity.

This is the main difference—the element of wisdom is what the Buddha discovered. Before the Buddha attained enlightenment, practitioners had already realised the virtue of giving, precepts, and concentration. However, giving, precepts, and concentration could not liberate their minds from the endless cycles of rebirth and death, because they couldn’t eradicate mental defilements and ignorance.

The only thing that can eradicate defilements and ignorance is wisdom, or the three marks of existence. Discerning the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self of the five aggregates will allow you to let go. Having let go, you will no longer be deluded or seek them out again.

Had that monk realised the three marks of existence, he wouldn't be attached to his robe. When he died, he would have gone forward, looking for other things—at what lay ahead of him. If he still had a body and the need for clothing, he would have looked ahead and sought a new one. No matter how good and wonderful his old one might be, he wouldn't be attached to it. Once parted, there is no regret or turning around.

But those without wisdom still linger on—being attached to all the good things that they have had. That's why some people come back and are reborn in their old homes. A wealthy man, who dug holes to safeguard his money, was reborn as a dog at his old home when he died, because he was still attached to his money.

You should all seriously take into consideration the three marks of existence: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self. This is to help you relinquish any forms of attachment (*upadāna*). It is not hard if you have someone to guide you. There was no one to guide us before the Buddha, so people didn't know how to let go and therefore were attached to things. But once the Buddha started teaching, from the very first time, Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña was readily able to let go of the five aggregates and enter the stream.



To be liberated does not require you to develop your concentration to the extent of recollecting past lives. It only requires you to calm your mind enough to remain equanimous (upekkhā). When you withdraw from your concentration, you can readily work on developing wisdom (vipassanā).

If you want to know about your kamma—the amount of good and bad deeds that you had done in your previous lives, you’ll need to sit in meditation.

Sitting meditation will allow you to recollect any of your previous lives. The Buddha also had the ability to recollect any of his previous lives. However, not everyone who does sitting meditation will develop this ability. It depends on each individual’s capacity—the level of their absorption (*samādhi*).

However, to become enlightened or be liberated does not require you to develop your concentration to the extent of recollecting past lives. It only requires you to calm your mind enough to remain equanimous (*upekkhā*). When you withdraw from your concentration, you can readily work on developing wisdom (*vipassanā*).

There are two types of people who manage to achieve liberation: *ceto-vimutti* (deliverance of mind) and *paññā-vimutti* (deliverance through wisdom).

Those with deliverance of mind are the ones who have attained deep absorption with their *samādhi*, and may develop certain special abilities—be they supernatural powers, psychic abilities, clairvoyance, recollection of past lives, and so on. Venerable Moggallāna is an example of *ceto-vimutti*.

Those with deliverance through wisdom, such as Venerable Sāriputra, may not have deep absorption in terms of *samādhi*. However, their minds are very sharp with comprehensive knowledge. They have the tendency to contemplate things in terms of cause and effect.

Those with deliverance through wisdom are able to help others more, in terms of teachings, than the ones with deliverance of mind as it requires the wisdom faculty—drawing on examples and making comparisons to demonstrate.

Certain respectable teachers didn't teach much. Luangpu Sao, for example, would only give a brief instruction to cultivate precepts, concentration, and wisdom and let people practise on their own; he wouldn't elaborate much. However, Luangpu Mun had attained both kinds of deliverance: of mind and through wisdom, just like the Buddha.

The Buddha could welcome and handle different people including heavenly beings (*devas*); he had the ability to read people's minds. With his astute wisdom, he was able to teach a wide range of people and appeal to each individual's ability and inclination—it's like being able to teach people who are left-handed, ambidextrous, and so on.

The Buddha himself had to try and test out everything. Not knowing to which level of samādhi he had to develop, he did it to the fullest extent possible, as he did with his faculty of wisdom. Therefore, he developed and attained the highest level of both faculties.

However, having heard this, you should know that you can be liberated without having to go all the way. That is, you are just happy with the liberation through just one faculty and don't need to achieve the highest level of both faculties. That's why each noble disciple has different abilities. Some have expertise in the wisdom faculty, others in samādhi, and some in both.





*Ignorance is delusion, whereas
Dhamma is knowledge. With Dhamma,
your thoughts will only be positive
and good.*

Out of ignorance come thoughts (*aviccā paccayā saṅkhārā*)—an inter-connecting chain of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). That’s how the mental elements (*nāma-khandhas*) work.

When a view arises, that view will stimulate thinking. For example, seeing that merit-making is good leads to an idea of going somewhere to make merit; such is a mental formation (*saṅkhāra*). The mind then acknowledges that thought through consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which in turn manifests itself as mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*)—the joining of the five aggregates: form, feelings, memories, thoughts, and consciousness.

The mind makes use of the form, or your body, to carry out its volition of going somewhere to make merit. Out of merit-making, a sense of happiness arises. With happiness comes a sense of appreciation or liking, leading to attachment of repeating the same action, to becoming (*bhava*), and to birth (*jāti*). Becoming and birth (*bhava-jāti*) is equivalent to repeating an action. Being content with one time of merit-making will lead to the next time. Being content with having born in this life will lead you to rebirth after you die and it just keeps on repeating. That’s a brief explanation.

Within the mind, there are many steps of dependent origination involved, starting from:



*Aviccā paccayā saṅkhārā,
Saṅkhārā paccayā viññāṇaṃ,
Viññāṇa paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ,
Nāma-rūpaṃ paccayā saḷāyataṇaṃ,
Saḷāyataṇa paccayā phassa,
Phassa paccayā vedanā,
Vedanā paccayā taṇhā,
Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ,
Upādānaṃ paccayā bhava,
Bhava paccayā jāti,
Jāti paccayā jarāmaṇaṃ*

Out of ignorance come thoughts.
Out of thoughts comes consciousness.
Out of consciousness come mind-body.
Out of mind-body come the six senses.
Out of the six senses comes contact—eyes see forms and ears hear sounds, giving rise to feelings.
Out of contact come feelings.
Out of feelings come cravings.
Out of cravings comes clinging or attachment—longing for the body (form) to last and trying to hang onto it.
Out of clinging comes becoming—losing the old form pushes one to look for and replace it with the new one, generating the factors for rebirth.
Out of becoming comes birth.
Out of birth come sufferings.



Such a cycle keeps on repeating itself endlessly, which all comes down to its root cause. If the root cause is ignorance, it will lead you to think in a way of generating factors and conditions for rebirth and death. Your thoughts will revolve around sensual pleasures, fortune, prestige, and praise.

But if the root cause is towards Dhamma, your thoughts will be about giving, precepts, and meditation practice, helping you to keep on eliminating saṅkhāra—mental volitions.

With your practice, you'll realise that thoughts are very irritating and tiresome: the more you think, the more your thoughts proliferate and the more agitated you get. If you can stop your thinking, you'll feel at ease.

Just keep being aware of how things are; that is the best. Whatever you see, you don't further speculate and just let things be the way they are meant to. You simply leave them be—you don't form any positive or negative opinions about them. You don't criticise and so on, which are the result of mental volitions.

When you form opinions, you'll generate feelings—be they happy, sad, content, or discontent. These feelings will give rise to craving and desire, leading you to take care of things and get involved with other things.

With wisdom, you'll see that things are just the way they are. No matter how much you try to fix or change things, they'll just revert back to the way they were eventually. If you manage to resolve certain issues today, there will just be more or other issues to resolve tomorrow—it is endless.

All these worldly issues and matters are without end, unlike those of Dhamma. Dhamma will suddenly arise as soon as you're aware that: you're being too involved or clouded by certain issues or things; you need to detach yourself from them; and you need to take care of and calm your mind by stopping to proliferate. Then that is considered *viccā paccayā saṅkhārā*—out of wisdom comes right thought.

With Dhamma, you won't think of things that bring you turmoil. When you have to think, you'll only think of wholesome things. The Buddha's mind and those of his noble disciples' are only full of skilful knowledge and wisdom—*dhamma paccayā saṅkhārā*.

They only think of wholesome thoughts—things that are constructive and beneficial. They can let go of their actions. They don't grasp or cling to them because they have wisdom: the right determination to keep things under control. When they come into contact with feelings, they remain equanimous—unaffected by such feelings—and so craving cannot arise. Without craving there is no attachment to things.

All of the enlightened beings' actions are pure, in terms of intentions. Their actions are not done out of attachment. They let by-gones be by-gones. Their actions are only for the sake of others'. They don't care if their actions will please others or not—not being bothered by or holding onto them.

Having weighed their volition against the Dhamma, they will do what is beneficial. Other people's criticism and comments don't concern them. Whatever other people may say are words of those unsound.

Who could ever imagine of criticising or making comments about the Buddha and his noble disciples? The Buddha and his noble disciples would never criticise nor judge one another.

Only unsound people like you would criticise and make comments about respectable teachers. You'll end up in hell without even knowing it. Your mind will be agitated and sullied by your own criticism and judgements.

You shouldn't really criticise or judge any respectable teachers. They are the ones with wisdom. They look at things from various perspectives—their awareness is much more profound and encompassing than yours. You only see in one dimension or from one point of view. Bearing this in mind will make you happy and at ease. So you don't have to worry about or be concerned with them.

You'd better worry about yourself. They are the ones to teach us and not vice versa. So there is no need for you to worry about them. They are well-rounded and perfect in all senses. Whatever they do is not out of whim or heedlessness like you. They have already thought it through with Dhamma. Ignorance is delusion, whereas Dhamma is knowledge. With Dhamma, your thoughts will only be positive and good.





The more and higher level of Dhamma you practise, the more content you'll be. You won't long for others to treat you in certain ways. When you reach the highest level of Dhamma, there won't be any craving and desire for anything at all.

Nuns (*bhikkhuni*), even if they have attained enlightenment, have to pay respect to monks (*bhikkhu*) including very junior ones, but not to novices (*sāmaṇera*). They only have to pay respect to monks and anyone above.

The higher level of Dhamma one has attained, the less self-conceit there should be. Self-conceit doesn't increase with the level of Dhamma. Conceit has an inverse relation to the level of Dhamma achieved. Those who have become enlightened will not be against anything that the Buddha taught or told to perform or practise.

A real practice is to lessen the sense of self. The higher level of Dhamma you practise, the less sense of self-conceit and self-importance you'll have, to the extent that they are completely gone.

This very self-conceit is the cause of discontent and suffering (*dukkha*). When somebody doesn't act according to your liking, you'll get unhappy—just as when you're a boss but being treated as a janitor. But if you don't react, and instead think that it's their issue. It's their own shortcoming to see you that way—not being wise enough or able to notice the difference—and there's nothing you can do. It doesn't even matter if they see you as a servant, because it is their opinion, their perception. But you know in your heart what and who you are.

Whatever and whoever you are doesn't mean that others will also have to notice and agree with it. However they see you, you'll still be who you are. The more and higher level of Dhamma you practise, the more content you'll be. You won't long for others to treat you in certain ways. When you reach the highest level of Dhamma, there won't be any craving and desire for anything at all.

I heard that Mae-chee Kaew had such a high level of Dhamma, but she would pay respect to any monks who visited her, no matter how junior they might be. She would pay respect to them due to the worldly conventions—lay people have to pay respect to monks. You have to be alert and able to discern that there is supposed reality (*sammutti*) and transcendental truth (*vimutti*) in this world, i.e., transcendence vs. conventions.

Luangta Mahā Boowa once wrote in the biography of Luangpu Mun about his answer to a heavenly-being's question concerning sitting arrangement when monks, including those enlightened ones, meet. How do they sit? There were two ways according to Luangpu Mun's answer.

In a transcendental sense, no one is superior nor inferior to one another. Whoever comes first, just sits in the front. They can sit wherever they want. In a conventional sense, they will have to sit in the order of their number of years in robes (*vassa*). Even if they're enlightened, they can't sit in front of an unenlightened but more senior monk. So it is the same with going on alms round. The more senior but unenlightened monks will be ahead of and lead those more junior but enlightened ones. It is not a concern as the enlightened monks will be able to discern and understand the difference between conventions and transcendence.

It is all a matter of your heart and mind. Nobody might know who or what you are. No matter how many years you have been ordained, you still have to act according to the conventions. It is the same in the case of any child and their parents. Some children are higher than their parents in terms of merit and mind level, but they don't hold on to the idea that they are wiser or better. They still pay respect to their parents and anyone more senior, even with their superior knowledge and abilities, which are a different matter.

People these days tend to be self-conceited. When they gain prestige, they suddenly see little significance in their parents—all because of their delusion. But those with wisdom, such as His Majesty the King, when he was with his mother in private, he would still pay respect to her as his mother. But when he was in public, being on his throne, the King's Mother would have to sit below him.

There are many levels of conventions. It is one thing in public and one thing at home or in private. You have to act appropriately, or in line, with the culture and traditions. It is not a big deal; it is as if you're acting. You might have to play a lead role in one and a villain in another; you just have to act according to the script. It is only acting. So as long as you don't get attached to your role, there won't be any problem. You can plan any role—a beggar, a servant, or a millionaire. It all depends on their request and decision as long as they pay you. You're basically an employee. So whatever they hire you to do, then just do it.

This is what it means to be detached, but still aware of where you stand, in terms of ranking, and what is virtuous or not, in terms of action. When you are in a situation and have to follow certain procedures, then just do it. Don't think that you are more special than others and need to be treated differently. If they don't know who you are, how can they treat you properly? Some people mistreat you out of their own ignorance, but they apologise to you once they've found out. There's no need for you to hold grudges at all, bearing in mind that it's just how it is with worldly matters. Praise and gossip are everywhere, so you have to be ready to accept and live with anything—be it contempt or praise, welcome or indifference. You can even be left to take care of everything yourself. If you don't expect anything from anyone, then there is no problem.



It was only the Buddha who contemplated and investigated thoroughly both the body and the mind. He couldn't find self anywhere but in one's thought.

It is considered fortunate to have found respectable teachers of the forest tradition. It is as if you had gone back to the Buddha's time. Everything is just like the Buddha's time as if he was personally guiding you on your practice. You can read in the Buddhist Canon (*Tipiṭaka*) of stories about monks' practices—walking and sitting meditation in the wilderness.

It is unlike what you see in the cities today. It is difficult for certain people to understand practising monks. They've been engrained since they were young about how Buddhism should be, in terms of merit-making and rites, etc. So they don't understand why forest-tradition monks live this kind of lifestyle. However, if you look into the original sources, in the Tipiṭaka, you'll see the contrast.

During the Buddha's life, he never built a single monastery. There were only lay people who offered buildings to him. Monks weren't involved in building things or collecting money and so on. It was simply not a monk's duty.

If nobody built monasteries for the monks, the Buddha taught them to live under a tree and in a cave or any abandoned places. That's what shelters for monks were during the Buddha's time; they didn't live in a monastery. When the Buddha first began teaching, he also lived under a tree in a calm and private setting.

There weren't any offerings of robes yet either. Monks had to collect rags that were left in cemeteries and piles of trash, lending to today's term of '*pha pa*', or forest garment. The term refers to rags that were left behind in cemeteries. Monks had to collect all the rags found and sew them together to make robes, which were then washed and dyed to be worn.

There was no one to offer monks robes during the Buddha’s time and so they were such rare commodities that monks had to take such a good care of them—as their own bodies. The three pieces of robes needed to be safeguarded and with them wherever they went. Monks were to be with all of their three pieces of robes at all times.

An alms bowl is another monk requisite—a very important one. Without the bowl, there was no way to feed oneself. It was thus very important for monks to take care of their alms bowls. They lived very simply without many possessions or materialistic things. But they had a lot of time for practice and cultivation, and so they became enlightened in large numbers.

During that time, practitioners already established their concentration (*samādhi*). Monks of other sects had also already achieved certain levels of calm and absorption (*jhāna*), they simply lacked wisdom (*paññā*). They just weren’t aware of the three marks of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*). Although they could see the impermanent nature of things (*anicca*) and a sense of unsatisfactoriness and suffering it brings (*dukkha*), they just couldn’t discern the lack of self (*anattā*).

They didn’t know that self (*attā*) is self-fashioned—a deeply-rooted belief created by the mind that had long been engrained in ordinary people’s minds. It was only the Buddha who contemplated and investigated thoroughly both the body and the mind. He couldn’t find self anywhere but in one’s thought.

His teaching to various mendicants led many to achieve enlightenment and become liberated very quickly since they already had developed their precepts and concentration. The only thing lacking was the faculty of wisdom. When the Buddha demonstrated his teaching to monks of various sects, some 500 of them at a time, they all readily gained enlightenment and became noble disciples (*arahants*).

Just think about it: from his first teaching on the full moon of the eighth month to that of the third month. Within just a few months—seven in total—there were 1,250 noble disciples who congregated on *Māgha-pūja* without prior notice.

But before the Buddha began to teach, there was literally not a single enlightened monk. Nobody was aware of what the Buddha had learnt. Once there was the Buddha to spread his knowledge through teaching, those who had heard managed to penetrate it through contemplation. Once they understood, they managed to let go. Therefore, you have to penetrate the very same truth: your body is not you and does not belong to you. With penetration comes liberation. You will no longer suffer because of your body.



*When it comes to meditation practice,
it doesn't matter when you get there,
you will get there eventually...
So all you have to do is to keep up with
your practice.*

When it comes to meditation practice, it doesn't matter when you get there. You will get there eventually. Once you're liberated, it is all the same for everyone. It's like eating. It doesn't matter when you feel full; you will feel full eventually. So all you have to do is to keep up with your practice.

As to when you'll reap the result, it all depends on your merit and destiny. For those who have lots of defilements and are dimwitted, it may take a while. But for those who have few defilements and perceptive minds, it will be very quick.

Just keep up with your practice. It doesn't matter when. It's like riding a bike, which will take you a little longer than driving a car, but both will get you there eventually.

It all depends on your merit. It all depends on the good deeds you've done in the past. You may compete with others on certain things, but definitely not when it comes to past merit and destiny.







‘Give up your possessions to save your organs. Give up your organs to save your life. Give up your life to save the Dhamma. For it is only the Dhamma that will lead you to peace and happiness and to liberation from all suffering.’

• *The Buddha*







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Marāṇa-sati

Recollection of death





Keep being aware of death.

Diligence—sustained effort and unwavering determination—is what all practitioners, who are determined to be liberated from all suffering, should constantly have in their hearts and minds.

There needs to be a willingness to cultivate various aspects of Dhamma that lead to liberation. You must be committed to and enjoy being diligent. You must be constantly focussed on maintaining your effort and practice in every posture from the moment you wake up until you fall asleep. Just keep reminding yourself of the Buddha’s words: ‘You can only be liberated from suffering through your diligent effort’.

This very effort, or diligence, is what pushes practitioners to excel in various faculties. You cannot develop qualities, such as mindfulness and wisdom, without it. There needs to be diligence as a drive—to push you to cultivate mindfulness (*sati*) and to control your thoughts (*paññā*). This is so that your thoughts don’t incline towards craving and desire or greed. Your various cravings should lean towards Dhamma, for example, by constantly reminding yourself of the possibility of death.

The recollection of death is to cultivate mindfulness, just as the recollection of the Buddha is developed by reciting ‘*Buddho*’. There are, however, two advantages to the recollection of death: to develop mindfulness and to cultivate wisdom simultaneously.

The recollection of the Buddha only allows for the cultivation of mindfulness, and not of wisdom. However, the recollection of death—being constantly aware of its possibility—allows you to develop both mindfulness and wisdom at the same time. If it suits you, those who practise the recollection of death can make a very quick progress on Dhamma.

Mindfulness will calm one's mind, allowing it to be equanimous. When there are craving and desire for one's body and life, wisdom will cure such an attachment, making death less insufferable.

Wisdom will allow one to see that having been born, the body is naturally and inevitably subject to death. To effectively put an end to the suffering of being attached to one's body and life, one needs to regularly make an effort to remind oneself of death.

The recollection of death can be directed towards your own body as well as that of others', especially of whom you are attached to—those that you love and care about. If you keep on recollecting regularly, you will see that your concern for them is futile. It doesn't do anyone any good. In fact, it only brings you harm and suffering. Each and everyone has to die; there is no exception or escape.

This is the benefit of being aware of the possibility of death. The recollection of death will take away your concern and anxiety, allowing you to be carefree of your own life and those of other people's.

You will discern that death is only natural and expected for having been born. It is only natural for anything that arises to eventually cease. This is what will occur in your heart when you keep recollecting death on a regular basis.

To consistently be aware of death requires diligence, or sustained effort: to contemplate death through meditation practice, to cultivate mindfulness, and to remind yourself of the possibility of death regularly.

The Buddha taught Venerable Ananda:

The Buddha: How many times a day do you remind yourself of death, Ananda?

Venerable Ananda: Four to five times a day, Venerable Sir—morning, midday, evening, before and after sleep, for example.

The Buddha: Ananda, you are still not heedful enough. You still don't contemplate death enough in order to liberate yourself from suffering. If you want to be free from suffering and fear of death, you have to be mindful of death with every in-breath and out-breath. You will then see that death is, in fact, very quick and sudden. If you inhale but don't exhale, then you're dead. It does not drag on, nor is it frightening. With any inhalation without exhalation, you will die, and vice versa. It is something that can happen very quickly. It can be so sudden that you can hardly be surprised or even afraid. If you are constantly mindful of the possibility of death, it will then be very normal. It will be just a matter of breathing in and breathing out.

But for those who are still sensitive and not strong-minded, their minds are not yet capable of recollecting death. They will get very fearful or depressed when they focus on the recollection of death. So they have to cultivate their mindfulness through other meditation subjects, which can be time-consuming. They will have to calm their minds first before getting to the recollection of death.

Death is something that all practitioners will need to contemplate at some point; it is just a matter of time. It can be done simultaneously with the cultivation of mindfulness, or it can be done separately in two steps.

The first step is to cultivate mindfulness so that your mind is calm and focussed first. Once your mind is concentrated—there is tranquility in place as a foundation—you can then practise recollecting death after having withdrawn from your concentration (*samādhi*). When your mind is calm, you won't get depressed or frightened while recollecting death.

Craving and desire, which are the cause of depression and fear, will be under the control of *samādhi*. Therefore, they won't conjure up depression and fear in your mind. Your mind will then be able to recollect and contemplate death. You will see that death is something as normal and expected as the weather; it has no effect on your mind at all.

The body is what is affected by death. However, the body cannot feel or acknowledge its own dying. The body is just like a tree that shows no reaction when it is being cut down. So it is only the mind that reacts to the body's dying.

When there is wisdom in your heart, telling you exactly who is being affected by death, then your mind won't react to it. It will accept and acknowledge the reality—the dying of your body.

It is not your mind that dies, but only your body. However, it is only your mind, and not your body, that suffers from the death of your body. It is like a tree that isn't bothered by getting cut down, but its owner is the one who gets upset. If the owner cares about and is attached to the tree—not wanting it to die, then he'll be very upset and angry when somebody cuts it down.

It is the same with your body and mind. Your mind is the owner of your body. Your mind is only a temporary owner of your body. It is not a permanent owner, because your body doesn't belong permanently to your mind—your body is bound to grow old, get ill, and die eventually.

If your mind is aware of this truth and able to distinguish itself from your body through contemplation, it will remain equanimous and be able to let go when something happens to your body. Your mind won't be bothered by your body's death.

Your suffering is due to your craving for the body not to die. However, with wisdom come equanimity and the ability to let go. Consistent contemplation and recollection of the inevitability of ageing, illness, and death will allow you to keep calm and let things be when something happens. This is because there is wisdom in place to keep reminding you so that you don't forget. But suffering will arise if there's craving for not dying, ageing, and getting ill.

Your wisdom and mindfulness come from your sustained effort in recollecting death. If you don't make the effort, then these Dhamma qualities will not take hold and resonate within you. You'll only be aware of them temporarily, i.e., while listening to the Dhamma, just as you are at the moment. When you go home, back to where you live or to all the things you do, you'll forget about what you've heard if you don't keep reminding yourself of death. It will just turn into perception (*saññā*). It will become a memory.

When you encounter your own death or that of others', you'll suddenly panic and get frightened. This is because you don't have the wisdom firmly rooted in your mind to prevent such fear from arising.

The fear arises out of your own negligence that your body is subject to ageing, illness, and death. When there are delusion and heedlessness, craving will arise—craving for the body to last. So when you're facing death, fearfulness will arise along with suffering. This is because you don't have the wisdom to keep you constantly grounded. But if you keep in mind what you've just heard about death—even after leaving here, and recollect it frequently—your mind will have the wisdom to protect you from being bothered and troubled by death.

It all comes down to your determination and diligence: you must keep developing mindfulness and cultivating wisdom as much as possible. Keep doing sitting meditation to calm your mind. Once your mind is calm, you will be able to let go of your body—your wisdom will make you aware that your body is not you, nor does it belong to you.

Your body is composed of four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. It will eventually revert to its original elements. The composition of the four elements in your body—earth, water, air, and fire—will eventually dissolve and disband. The air element will no longer go in and out of your body, and so the fire element will disappear. The water element will leave your body to the point where your body is all dried up and turns into earth.

This is how it is with everyone's body. Having been born, each and everyone of us is subject to ageing, illness, and death. No one can prevent their body from ageing, getting ill, and dying. Your wisdom, however, will allow you to accept such reality—to accept the natural course of your body: ageing, illness, and death are inevitable.



*If you want to be free from suffering
and fear of death, you have to be
mindful of death with every in-breath
and out-breath.*

• *The Buddha*

The mind that contemplates the body is not part of the body. The mind is only just the perceiver, or the thinker. The mind happens to have the body as its possession, that is, to fulfil its various desires. When the mind wants to look at forms and listen to sounds, it needs the body as its means to do so.

But once the mind is calm, then it no longer needs to rely on the body. The peace of mind from tranquility outweighs physical and sensual pleasures that come from seeing forms or listening to various sounds. With peace of mind, which is far superior to physical pleasures, there is then no longer any need for the physical body. When there is no such need, whether the body lives or dies is no longer a concern.

If your mind is not yet calm—still not able to experience bliss from tranquility—it will then have to rely on your body to seek physical pleasures. If you're still relying on your physical body, there will then be concern for and attachment to it. There will be craving for your body to remain with your mind, because without your body, your mind won't be able to seek pleasures.

It all comes down to letting go of your body. To be able to let go requires concentration and tranquility. There needs to be a sense of ease that arises from calm first. With that sense of ease from calm, you will be able to let go of things, such as your body, very easily. The physical pleasures won't be comparable to the peace of mind. You all have to make an effort to establish that peace of mind first—the bliss that comes from having your mind focussed in concentration—mental one-pointedness (*ekaggatārammaṇa*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

To make your mind focussed and calm requires mindfulness. Mindfulness, as a means, will pull your mind together and inwards. Craving and desire are what constantly push your mind outwards through your body.

For instance, craving for forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and touch will lure your mind out through the channels of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body in order to sense them. These sensual pleasures, which are temporary, will make you crave for more, thus preventing your mind from going inwards. Instead, your mind will constantly seek out forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and touch. If you let your mind do so, it will never be at ease.

Your mind can only find peace when you disengage it from forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and touch—pulling it back and away from your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body—and rein it inwards. To do so requires mindfulness, which can be done through any means of meditation subjects, whether you choose the recollection of death, the Buddha, the body, or any other subject. There are forty different meditation subjects to cultivate mindfulness, called the forty *kammaṅgāna*.

The forty meditation subjects, or recollection techniques, are means to cultivate both mindfulness and wisdom. For instance, the recollections of death and foulness of the body (*asubha*) help foster both mindfulness and insight.

If they somehow don't suit you, you can first use other techniques, such as focussing your mind on your breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*), on your body (*kāyagatā-sati*), or on the Buddha (*Buddhānu-sati*). They are to help your mind become concentrated and gain samādhi.

With your mind being focussed in samādhi and at ease, the peace of mind will enable you to stop relying on your body. You'll be able to stop resorting to things as means to bring you peace and happiness. Such calm is much superior to any other kind of happiness. If you were to think of it in terms of products, it would be the most valuable and expensive. It is as if you had something that is worth more and better than what you already have.

For instance, if you were given a choice of a new, more valuable house and your current old house, you'd naturally choose the new one. Or if you were offered the latest model and most expensive car in exchange for your current old car, you'd naturally take the offer because it is better than what you have currently.

It is just the same with the happiness that we experience at the moment. The sensual pleasures from forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and touch are not comparable to peace of mind. When your mind is focussed in samādhi, you'll see readily the difference between these two and know which to choose. Once you've experienced such ease and calm, even just once and for a short while, it will make you satisfied—giving you a sense of proper determination (*chanda*) and appreciation to search for this kind of happiness, instead of the old kinds.

With the right determination come the diligence and the effort to cultivate mindfulness more and more frequently. The more mindfulness you have, the calmer your mind will be. With little and sporadic mindfulness, your calmness will be small and intermittent. With constant mindfulness, your calmness will be continual.

Practitioners who have experienced the one-pointedness of their minds will see the value of cultivating mindfulness. Once you've experienced samādhi and a blissful feeling arising from your peaceful mind, you'll then want to rid yourself of all the things you have. Possessions, money, and other things are not comparable to the peace of a calm mind.

A taste of Dhamma outdoes any other taste. Whoever gets a chance to experience it, even just for a moment, will appreciate it so much that they will no longer want anything else. It is as if you've tasted just a drop of a particular dish, you appreciate it so much that you no longer want any other dishes. What you've tasted is so much better than anything else. That's what the taste of Dhamma is like.

The taste of Dhamma is a taste of tranquility—one that is derived from continually cultivating mindfulness. If you don't yet have the diligence or the effort to develop mindfulness, you'll have to bear in mind the results of cultivating mindfulness through sustained effort.

You need to remind yourself that the results will outweigh anything you have at the moment. If you're aware that the results of your diligence will be greater than the things that you have, you'll then have the motivation to sustain your effort and to continually cultivate mindfulness.

With sustained effort, you'll surely reap a result sooner or later. If there is a will, there is a way. It all comes down to your diligence. Dhamma practitioners shouldn't overlook the importance of diligence. You should always have it in your mind. As soon as you awake, you need to instantly tell yourself to start practising—to cultivate mindfulness.

You'll need to get rid of things that are in your way of keeping up with your mindfulness and effort. If your work is in the way, then try to cut down on it. If you still have to make a living, do just enough so that you can afford what you need. Don't acquire more than what is necessary to afford the basic necessities. Food, shelter, medication, and clothing are all you need to take care of your body. This is so that you can make use of your body for cultivation: to sustain your diligence and effort, to develop mindfulness, to cultivate wisdom, and to practise meditation.

Don't do more than that. There is no use in doing so. Anything that is more than what you really need to afford the basic necessities will not be able to give you peace of mind. It won't give you the taste of Dhamma, which outdoes any other taste. You'll have more time to dedicate to the continual practice of cultivating mindfulness.



When you die, that is, your body ceases to be, you'll need to look for a new one to be reborn. Having been born, you'll then be subject to ageing, illness, and death again.

You need to get rid of any obstacle that prevents you from putting effort into your practice. It is as if you were walking along a path and there was a branch or something in your way. What would you do? You would need to get rid of it if you wanted to get through.

You need to rid yourself of any impediment to your diligence and effort. These obstacles are not worth it or of any use to your mind. Although they might be of use to your former ways of seeking happiness, but once you've experienced the happiness that comes from cultivating mindfulness, you'd rather cut off these impediments. You know that they can't make your mind at ease and calm.

For instance, if you're still attached to television programmes and other social activities, you'll need to weigh the happiness you gain from watching television and doing those activities against the peace of mind that comes from your practice. You need to figure out which kind of happiness lasts and which doesn't.

If you use your wisdom to consider these things, you'll see that all the happiness you have previously sought after and experienced is temporary and fleeting. It is not in any way gratifying or fulfilling, because it is the kind of happiness gained through your physical body.

When you die, that is, your body ceases to be, you'll need to look for a new one to be reborn. Having been born, you'll then be subject to ageing, illness, and death again.

If you instead seek happiness through peace of mind, you'll experience lasting happiness, because it is within your heart. It will never deteriorate once you know how to cultivate it. You'll know how to maintain it and be able to do so, so that it stays in your heart forever.

You will no longer need your body to search for pleasure and happiness. When your body dies, you won't need to come back for a new one and be subject to ageing, illness, and death again. You'll be liberated from suffering due to your diligence and effort, just as the Buddha said and taught.

Once you've compared the two kinds of happiness, you'll see that peace of mind is the real happiness—the kind of happiness you should aim for. You'll need to get rid of any obstacles that lie in the way of such happiness, be they social functions or other responsibilities.

If you already make enough for a living, then there is no concern. Why should you need to earn more? It is rather pointless. You may claim that you're doing it for someone else, but why should you even do that? Wouldn't it be better to teach them how to gain peace of mind? You can invite them along to practise meditation with you, so that they will experience real happiness.

For those who still need to earn money in order to provide other people with certain quality of living, who would support them if you died or if something were to happen to you? They would have to take care of themselves regardless. Bearing that in mind, you'll be able to detach yourself from personal and familial ties and other obligations. This is so that you have the time to put towards your diligence and effort, to develop mindfulness and to practise meditation to calm your mind. Once you've experienced peace of mind, you can use the faculty of wisdom to maintain it further.

Craving is what will spoil your peace of mind. It is something that cannot be eradicated through mindfulness and concentration. Mindfulness and concentration only suppress it temporarily. But when your mind is active and proliferating, craving will arise. When it does and you let it act out, it will ruin your peace of mind. So you must resort to wisdom when there is craving.

Your wisdom will show you that whatever your craving is after brings you more suffering than happiness since such happiness is so short-lived. Longing for sensual pleasures through forms, sounds, odours, tastes, and touch will only make you happy while basking in them. But the pleasures quickly fade away as soon as you're not in contact with the stimuli; and when that happens, you crave for more. So you constantly need and crave these sensual pleasures. When you can't have them, you get frustrated.

This is a lesson that you have to remind yourself: not to indulge your craving. It is better to stay put, to calm your mind, and to stop your craving. With both wisdom and mindfulness, you will be able to resist your craving. When you can resist and don't indulge your craving, it will subside and eventually not recur. When there is no craving, your mind will constantly be still, calm, and at ease. The role of wisdom is to constantly remind you that indulging your craving will not bring you happiness, but only more suffering. Not indulging your craving is instead what makes you happy.

By indulging your craving, the very things that you long for will make you suffer. You will become possessive of, concerned for, and attached to whatever you manage to get hold of. You will not want to lose what you've gained. However, it is only natural for all the things in this world, of which you've managed to acquire due to your craving, to deteriorate and become depleted—they are bound to end. And when that happens, a sense of suffering will arise.

The role of wisdom is to eradicate all the various cravings from your mind, whereas mindfulness, or concentration, is only used to suppress them temporarily. For instance, when you are recollecting death, you won't be able to think of other things or other people. When you don't, your mind is free of craving. When your mind is calm and has stopped thinking, all of your various cravings will also cease along with your thoughts.

Your thoughts are the means of your craving. When there is no thought, your craving will vanish. When there is no craving, your mind will be calm, happy, and at ease. As soon as you start thinking about things and other people, craving will arise and chase away your peace of mind.

These are the things that will calm your mind and also the things that will ruffle it. Either mindfulness or wisdom is what will give you peace of mind and happiness. With mindfulness, your mind will be calm temporarily. With wisdom, your mind will be calm permanently.

In the beginning, you have to first rely on mindfulness as a means to calm your mind since you still lack wisdom. If your mind is not calm enough to use wisdom, it may make you depressed rather than calm when you try to reflect on the possibility of death. It may discourage, bore, or even frighten you, which would prevent you from further developing your insight.

You have to first calm your mind by cultivating mindfulness through other techniques, such as the recollections of the Buddha and the body. You have to constantly watch the movement of and changes in your body to prevent your mind from thinking about other things and other people. When you do your sitting meditation, you can watch your breathing or recite ‘Buddho’. If your mind can stay with one thing or the other, soon enough your mind will be focussed and reach a state of calm.

When your mind is calm, other negative emotions that arise from contemplating the truth, such as death, will be suppressed by your peace of mind. When you withdraw initially from your concentration, your peace of mind will still be fully intact and so you should easily use that period to contemplate the possibility of death. You will not then feel depressed and instead understand in your mind your body’s subjection to death—no one can prevent the body from dying.



If you manage to redirect your effort—away from worldly gains and sensual pleasures, and instead towards seeking peace of mind through the cultivation of mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—you will then be free from the suffering... you will no longer need to rely on your body. You'll have the Dhamma as your refuge.

This craving to live, or to not die, will create unnecessary suffering. Having discerned this truth, you'd rather give in to dying than suffer when you have to face it. The sense of suffering is, in fact, harmful to your mind whereas the death actually isn't. Death is detrimental to your body. Your body, however, does not react to it as it is not aware of its own death. So when you've developed wisdom, you'll be able to prevent your mind from wanting not to die. When you're able to do that, then you will not be bothered by your death and therefore can die peacefully.

This is what practising Dhamma to liberate oneself from all suffering entails. You must maintain your diligence in order to liberate yourself from suffering. You must constantly sustain your effort to practise, from the moment you awake until the moment you go to sleep.

The Buddha taught monks to start practising from the moment they rise. As soon as they wake up at two or three in the morning, they should do walking and sitting meditation. They should cultivate their wisdom depending on their level of Dhamma. When it is time for them to carry out their daily routine, they should remain mindful of each activity—going on alms round, eating and washing, and drying their bowls. They need to stay focussed on the tasks at hand. When they finish with their duties and return to their living quarters, they should then alternate between walking and sitting meditation.

If they are tired or lack energy, they may rest for an hour or so during the day. They should then carry on with their walking and sitting meditation after they rest until it is time to sweep. Afterwards they may have their allowable drinks, take a shower, and wash their robes. They can then resume walking and sitting meditation until about ten or eleven o'clock at night. They should sleep for about four to five hours. And once they awake at two or three in the morning, they should start all over again—carrying on practising.

This is what being diligent entails. It involves sustaining your effort to motivate your mind to cultivate various Dhamma qualities, especially mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

With mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, liberation from suffering is undoubtedly bound to occur. It is the way that the Buddha and his noble disciples have passed and used to achieve good results, which they have passed on to us. If you have faith and confidence in them and put their way into practice, there is then no doubt that you will reap the very same results that the Buddha and his noble disciples did.

The reason why such a result has yet to occur for you is due to your lack of diligence and effort, unlike the Buddha's and his noble disciples'. You may have the effort, but you're putting it in the wrong place.

Instead of being diligent with cultivating Dhamma, i.e., developing mindfulness and wisdom, you put your effort towards worldly gains, prestige, and praise. You put it towards sensual pleasures through your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. So instead of being free from suffering, you've ensnared yourself in more suffering—the suffering of birth, ageing, illness, and death, and of the endless cycle of rebirth and death.

The effort you put towards worldly gains, prestige, praise, and sensual pleasures through your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body requires a physical body. With the physical body as a means when you're alive, your craving for such happiness will impel your mind to look for a new body at the moment of your death.

Your desires to seek pleasures—from worldly gains and praise, and through your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body—don't die with your body, but instead remain with your mind. They will make you go through multiple cycles of birth, ageing, illness, and death until you direct your effort away from those sensual pleasures and worldly gains, that is, towards seeking peace of mind through the cultivation of mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

If you manage to redirect your effort—away from worldly gains and sensual pleasures, and instead towards seeking peace of mind through the cultivation of mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—you will then be free from the suffering inherent in the endless cycle of rebirth and death.

This is because you will no longer need to rely on your body. You'll have the Dhamma as your refuge. It is this very Dhamma that will give you peace of mind. It will allow you not to rely on your body as a means for worldly gains, prestige, praise, and sensual pleasures through your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body.

When you no longer need your body, you will no longer have to be reborn. You'll be permanently liberated from all suffering. This is what the Buddha taught: 'You can only be liberated from suffering through your diligent effort.'

Please focus on and aim for maintaining your diligence and effort in your practice. Try to remind yourself from now on that you have to be diligent with your practice from the moment you awake.

You can sustain your effort by continually cultivating your mindfulness through reciting ‘Buddho’, recollecting death, or watching the movement of your body. These practices are considered maintaining your diligence and effort.

If you do them continually, you’ll see a result—tranquility will arise. When you’ve experienced peace of mind and discerned its value and the bliss from it, you will then want to maintain it. You will use your wisdom to get rid of things that tamper with such calm. With wisdom, you will be able to eradicate all of the craving and desire that hinder your peace of mind. When your craving has been eliminated by your wisdom, there will be nothing to spoil such bliss.

The joy from tranquility is insurmountable, resulting in the highest form of bliss, or *paramañ sukhaṃ*. Your mind will be enlightened—having reached *nibbāna*—and be free from the endless cycle of rebirth and death. This is the goal of our lives—the goal of maintaining your diligence and effort, and of cultivating Dhamma, i.e., mindfulness and wisdom. It is all for liberation (*vimutti*).

Please take what I’ve said about diligence and effort into consideration for your practice in order to liberate yourself from suffering.





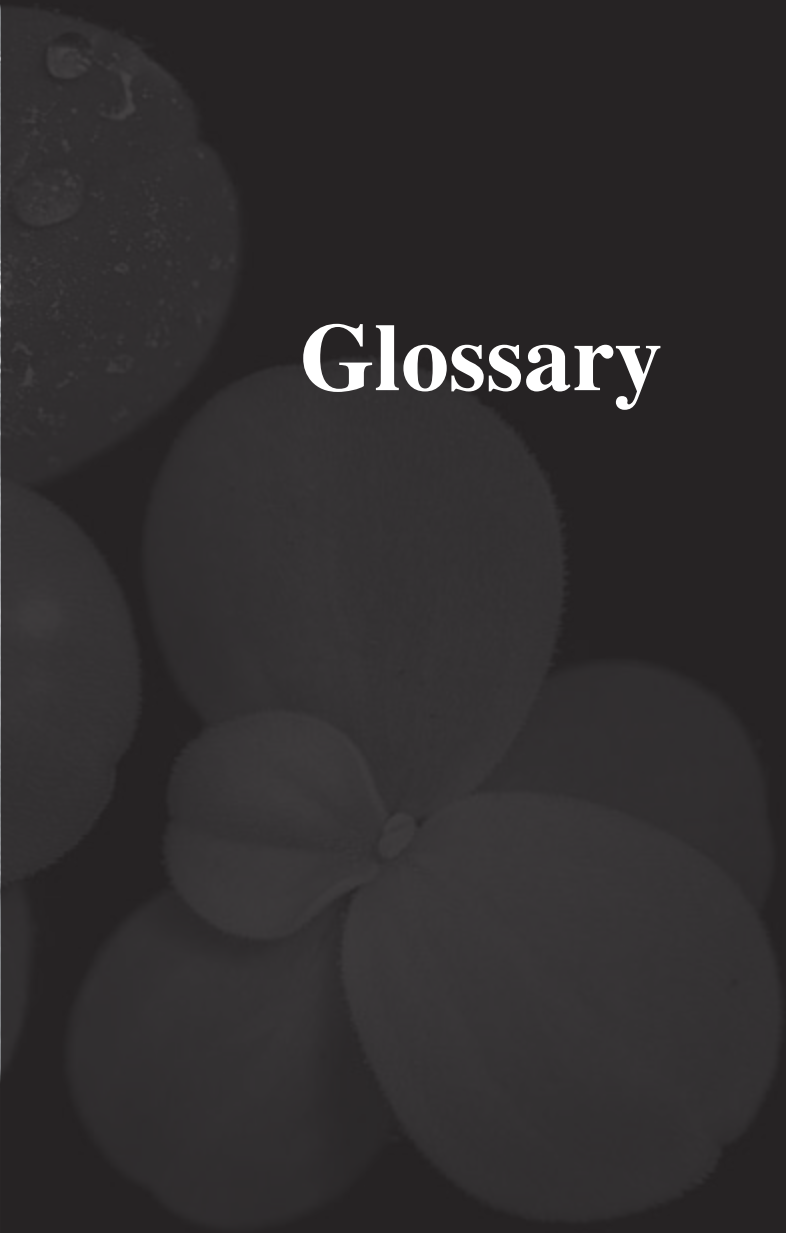
Having been born, each and everyone of us is subject to ageing, illness, and death... Your wisdom will allow you to accept such reality—to accept the natural course of your body: ageing, illness, and death are inevitable.







Glossary



ācariya	Mentor. Also used as a term of respect when referring to a senior monk. When capitalised, <i>Ācariya</i> is the respectful title given to a teacher by his disciples, as in Ācariya Mun and Ācariya Sao.
akusala	Unwholesome, unskillful, demeritorious.
ajaan, ajahn	(Thai). Teacher; mentor. Equivalent to the Pāli <i>ācariya</i> .
ānāpāna-sati	Mindfulness of breathing. A meditation practice in which one maintains one's attention and mindfulness on the sensations of breathing.
anattā	Non-self. One of the essential doctrines and a part of three marks of existence. The doctrine that there is in humans no permanent, underlying substance that can be called the soul. Instead, the individual is compounded of five aggregates (<i>khandhas</i>) that are constantly changing.
anicca	Inconstant, unsteady, impermanent. Impermanence is one of the essential doctrines and a part of three marks of existence. The doctrine asserts that all of conditioned existence, without exception, is 'transient, evanescent, and inconstant'. All temporal things, whether material or mental, are compounded objects in a continuous change of condition, subject to decline and destruction.
apāya-bhūmi	State of deprivation, the four lower levels of existence into which one might be reborn as a result of past unskillful actions: rebirth in hell, as a hungry ghost (<i>peta</i>), as an angry demon (<i>asura</i>), or as a common animal. None of these states is permanent.
appanā-samādhi	Absorption concentration; full concentration that exists during absorption (<i>jhāna</i>).
arahant	A 'worthy one' or 'pure one'. A person whose mind is free of defilement (<i>kilesa</i>), who has abandoned all ten of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (<i>saṃyojana</i>), whose heart is free of mental effluents (<i>āsava</i>), and who is thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.
asubha	Unattractiveness, loathsomeness, foulness. The Buddha recommends

contemplation of this aspect of the body (*asubha-kammaṭṭhāna*—one of the forty meditation subjects) as an antidote to lust and complacency.

attā	The concept of self.
avijjā	Unawareness, ignorance, obscured awareness, delusion about one’s own true nature.
baan	(Thai). Village.
bala	Power, strength, health, energy.
bhava	Becoming. States of being that develop first in the mind and can then be experienced as internal worlds and/or as worlds on an external level. There are three levels of becoming: the sensual level, the level of form, and the level of formlessness. Bhava is listed as the tenth of the Twelve Links (<i>nidānas</i>) of Dependent Origination (<i>paṭiccasamuppāda</i>).
bhava-jāti	States of existence and birth.
bhāvanā	Mental cultivation or development, meditation. The third of the three grounds for meritorious action, together with giving (<i>dāna</i>) and precepts (<i>sila</i>).
bhāvanā-maya-paññā	Experiential wisdom. Understanding based on mental development. One of the three types of wisdom.
bhāva-taṇhā	Craving for existence, craving to have or to be. One of the three types of craving (<i>taṇhā</i>).
bhavanga	Ground of becoming; a state of subconsciousness that can occur during one’s mental concentration (<i>samādhi</i>).
bhikkhu	A Buddhist monk. A man who has given up the householder’s life to live a life of heightened virtue in accordance with the <i>Vinaya</i> in general, and the <i>Pāṭimokkha</i> rules in particular. A Buddhist nun. Bhikkhunis are required to take extra vows and are

bhikkhuni	subordinate to and reliant upon the bhikkhu order. In places where the bhikkhuni lineage was historically missing or has died out, alternative forms of renunciation have developed, like the mae-chee in Thailand.
brahmā	‘Great One’. An inhabitant of the non-sensual heavens of form or formlessness.
Buddha	The name given to one who rediscovers for himself the liberating path of Dhamma, after a long period of its having been forgotten by the world. According to tradition, a long line of Buddhas stretches off into the distant past. The most recent Buddha was born Siddhattha Gotama in India in the sixth century BCE. A well-educated and wealthy young man, he relinquished his family and his princely inheritance in the prime of his life to search for true freedom and an end to suffering (<i>dukkha</i>). After seven years of austerities in the forest, he rediscovered the ‘middle way’ and achieved his goal, becoming Buddha.
Buddha Ariya Metteya	A future Buddha of this world in Buddhist eschatology. A bodhisattva who will appear on Earth in the future, achieve complete enlightenment, and teach the pure dhamma; a successor to the present Buddha, Gautama Buddha. The prophecy of the arrival of Buddha Ariya Metteya refers to a time in the future when the dhamma will have been forgotten by most on the terrestrial world.
buddhānu-sati	Recollection of the Buddha. One of the forty meditation subjects.
Buddho	Awake, enlightened. A traditional epithet for the Buddha, ‘ <i>Buddho</i> ’ is a preparatory meditation word (<i>parikamma</i>) that is repeated mentally while reflecting on the Buddha’s special qualities. In its simplest form, one focusses attention exclusively on the repetition of ‘Buddho’, continuously thinking the word ‘Buddho’ while in meditation. One should simply be aware of each repetition of ‘Buddho, Buddho, Buddho’ to the exclusion of all else. Once it becomes continuous, this simple repetition will produce results of peace and calm in the heart.
caṅkama	Walking meditation, usually in the form of walking back and forth along a prescribed path.

Cattāri-ariyasaccāri	‘The Four Noble Truths’: suffering (<i>dukkha</i>), the arising of dukkha, the cessation of dukkha, and the path leading to the cessation of dukkha.
ceto-vimutti	Awareness-release. One of the two kinds of release—freedom from the fabrications and conventions of the mind.
chanda	Will, aspiration, the will to do, resolve, zeal, desire, impulse, wish, loving interest, desire for truth and understanding.
citta	Mind, heart, state of consciousness. The underlying essence of mind where Dhamma and the kilesas dwell. In its pure state, it is indefinable. It is beyond birth and death. It controls the khandhas, but does not die when they do.
citta-vedanā	Feelings that are experienced only in the mind.
dāna	Generosity, giving, liberality, offering, alms. Specifically, giving of any of the four requisites to the monastic order. More generally, the inclination to give, without any expectation of the reward.
desanā	Preaching; discourse; sermon; instruction; Dhamma talk.
deva (devatā)	‘Shining one’. An inhabitant of the heavenly realms.
Devadatta	A cousin of the Buddha who tried to effect a schism in the saṅgha and who has since become emblematic for all Buddhists who work knowingly or unknowingly to undermine the religion from within.
Dhamma	The truth of the way things are. The teachings of the Buddha that reveal the truth and elucidate the means of realising it as a direct phenomenon.
dhamma	(1) Event, a phenomenon in and of itself; (2) mental quality; (3) the teachings of the Buddha; (4) <i>nibbāna</i> . Also, principles of behaviour that human beings ought to follow so as to fit in with the right natural order of things; qualities of mind they should develop so as to realise the inherent quality of the mind in and of itself. By extension, 'Dhamma' (usu. capitalised) is used also to denote any doctrine that teaches such things. Thus the Dhamma of the Buddha denotes both his teachings and

the direct experience of nibbāna, the quality at which those teachings are aimed.

Dhamma-cakkappavattana Sutta

'The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dhamma'. A Buddhist text considered to be a record of the first teaching given by the Buddha after he attained enlightenment. According to tradition, the Buddha gave this teaching in Sarnath, India, to the five ascetics (his former companions with whom he had spent six years practising austerities). The main topic of this Sutta is the Four Noble Truths, which are the central teachings of Buddhism that provide a unifying theme, or conceptual framework, for all of Buddhist thought. This Sutta also introduces the Buddhist concepts of the middle way, impermanence, and dependent origination.

Dhamma-Vinaya

Doctrine (*dhamma*) and Discipline (*vinaya*). The Buddha's own name for the religion he founded.

dhutaṅga

Voluntary ascetic practices that monks and other meditators may undertake from time to time or as a long-term commitment in order to cultivate renunciation and contentment, and to stir up energy. For the monks, there are thirteen such practices: (1) using only patched-up robes; (2) using only one set of three robes; (3) going for alms; (4) not by-passing any donors on one's alms path; (5) eating no more than one meal a day; (6) eating only from the alms-bowl; (7) refusing any food offered after the alms-round; (8) living in the forest; (9) living under a tree; (10) living under the open sky; (11) living in a cemetery; (12) being content with whatever dwelling one has; (13) not lying down.

dukkha

Suffering, pain, discontent, the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomena. Dukkha is the condition of fundamental discontent that is inherent within the very nature of all sentient existence. Essentially, it is the underlying sense of dissatisfaction that ultimately undermines even the most pleasant experiences, for everything in the phenomenal world is subject to change and therefore unreliable. Thus, all of saṃsāric existence is characterised by dukkha.

dukkha-vedanā

Painful feeling, unpleasant feeling.

ekaggatārammaṇa

Singleness of preoccupation. 'One-pointedness'. In meditation, the

mental quality that allows one's attention to remain collected and focussed on the chosen meditation object. Ekagattārammaṇa reaches full maturity upon the development of the fourth level of *jhāna*.

jāti	Birth. The arising of a new living entity within the cyclic existence (<i>samsāra</i>). Jāti is identified as an aspect of suffering (<i>dukkha</i>) within the teachings on the Four Noble Truths and as the eleventh link within the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination.
jhāna	Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focussed on a single physical sensation (resulting in <i>rūpa jhāna</i>) or mental notion (resulting in <i>arūpa jhāna</i>). Development of jhāna arises from the temporary suspension of the five hindrances (<i>nīvaraṇa</i>) through the development of five mental factors: directed thought (<i>vitakka</i>), evaluation (<i>vicāra</i>), rapture (<i>pīti</i>), pleasure (<i>sukha</i>), and singleness of preoccupation (<i>ekaggatārammaṇa</i>).
kalyāṇa-mitta	Admirable friend. A mentor or teacher of Dhamma.
kāma-chanda	Sensual desire. One of the five hindrances to concentration.
kāma-sukha	Sensual pleasures.
kāma-taṇhā	Craving for sensual pleasures. One of the three types of craving.
kamma	Intentional acts that result in states of being and birth.
kammaṭṭhāna	‘Basis of work’. Kammaṭṭhāna refers to the ‘occupation’ of a practising Buddhist monk: namely, the contemplation of certain meditation themes that are conducive to uprooting the defiling forces of greed, hatred, and delusion from his mind. In the ordination procedure, a new monk is taught the five basic kammaṭṭhāna that lay the groundwork for contemplation of the body: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, and skin. By extension, kammaṭṭhāna includes all 40 of the classical Buddhist meditation subjects. The term kammaṭṭhāna is most often used to identify the particular Thai forest tradition and lineage that was founded by Ācariya Sao and Ācariya Mun.

karunā	Compassion, sympathy. The aspiration to find a way to be truly helpful to oneself and others. One of the four ‘sublime abodes’ (<i>brahma-vihāra</i>).
kaṭhina	A ceremony, held in the fourth month of the rainy season, in which a saṅgha of bhikkhus receives a gift of cloth from lay people, bestows it on one of their members, and then makes it into a robe before dawn of the following day.
kāya	Body. Kāya usually refers to the physical body.
kāyagatā-sati	Mindfulness immersed in the body. This is a blanket term covering several meditation themes: keeping the breath in mind; being mindful of the body’s posture; being mindful of one’s activities; analysing the body into its parts; analysing the body into its physical properties; contemplating the fact that the body is inevitably subject to death and disintegration.
kāya-vedanā	Feelings that are experienced by one’s physical body.
khandha	‘Group’ or ‘aggregate’. In the plural, khandhas refer to the five physical and mental components of personality (body, feelings, memory, thoughts, consciousness) and to the sensory experience in general (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations). Also known as ‘aggregates of attachment’ because they are the objects of a craving for personal existence, they are, in fact, simply classes of natural phenomena that continuously arise and cease and are devoid of any enduring self-identity whatsoever.
kilesa	Mental defilement. Kilesas are negative psychological and emotional forces existing within the hearts and minds of all living beings. These defilements are of three basic types: greed, hatred, and delusion. All of them are ingenerate pollutants that contaminate the way people think, speak, and act, and thus corrupt from within the very intention and purpose of their existence, binding them (through the inevitable consequences of their actions) ever more firmly to the perpetual cycle of rebirth. Their manifestations are many and varied. They include passion, jealousy, envy, conceit, vanity, pride, stinginess, arrogance, anger, resentment, including plus all sorts of more subtle variations

that invariably produce the unwholesome and harmful states of mind which are responsible for so much human misery. These various kilesa-driven mental states interact and combine to create patterns of conduct that perpetuate people's suffering and give rise to all of the world's disharmony.

klot	(Thai). Canopy used by a practising Buddhist monk as a shelter usually in a forest.
kusala	Wholesome, skilful, good, meritorious. An action characterised by this moral quality (<i>kusala-kamma</i>) is bound to result (eventually) in happiness and a favorable outcome. Actions characterised by its opposite (<i>akusala-kamma</i>) lead to sorrow.
kuṭi	An abode of a Buddhist monk or novice; hut or home for a monk.
lokuttara-dhamma	Transcendental truth.
Luangta	(Thai). 'Venerable (maternal) Grandfather'. A reverential term for an elderly monk, such as Luangta Mahā Boowa.
Luangpu	(Thai). 'Venerable (paternal) Grandfather'. A reverential term for an elderly monk, such as Luangpu Mun.
magga	Path, usually refers to the eight-fold path leading to <i>nibbāna</i> . Specifically, the path to the cessation of suffering and stress.
Māgha-pūja	'The third lunar month' (<i>māgha</i>) and 'to venerate' (<i>pūja</i>). An important Buddhist festival celebrated on the full moon day of the third lunar month to venerate the Buddha and his teachings. It marks the four auspicious occasions, occurring at the Veḷuvana bamboo grove, ten months after the enlightenment of the Buddha: 1,250 disciples came to see the Buddha that evening without being summoned; all of them were arahants; all were ordained by the Buddha himself (<i>ehibhikkhus</i>); and it was the full-moon day.
Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta	'The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness'. One of the two most important and widely studied discourses in the Pāli Canon

of Theravada Buddhism, acting as the foundation for mindfulness meditational practice.

- mettā** Loving-kindness, friendliness, pure love, goodwill. One of the ten perfections (*pāramis*) and one of the four ‘sublime abodes’ (*brahma-vihāra*).
- nāma-khandha** Mental phenomena (*nāma*) and aggregate (*khandha*). A collective term for the mental components of the five khandhas: feelings (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), thoughts (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).
- nāma-rūpa** Name-and-form, mind-and-matter, mentality-physicality. The union of mental phenomena (*nāma*) and physical phenomena (*rūpa*), conditioned by consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in the causal chain of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).
- namo tassa** Shortened phrase, referring to ‘*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhassa*’—Honour to the Blessed One, the Exalted One, the fully Enlightened One.
- nibbāna** ‘Extinguished’. The ‘unbinding’ of the mind from the mental effluents (*āsavas*), defilements (*kilesas*), and the round of rebirth (*vaṭṭa*), and from all that can be described or defined. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries the connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. That is to say, the threefold fire of greed, hatred, and delusion goes out in the heart due to lack of fuel. The extinguishing of this fire frees the mind from everything that binds it to the cycle of rebirth and the suffering experienced therein. Nibbāna represents absolute freedom, the supreme happiness—the ultimate goal of the Buddhist training.
- Ovāda-paṭimokkha** The principles of Buddhism the Buddha gave his noble disciples on *Māgha-pūja*: to cease from all evil, to do what is good, to cleanse one’s mind.
- pa** (Thai). Forest.
- pacceka-buddha** Private Buddha. One who, like a Buddha, has gained Awakening without the benefit of a teacher, but who lacks the requisite store of perfections

(*pāramis*) to teach others the practice that leads to Awakening. On attaining the goal, a pacceka-buddha lives a solitary life.

Pāli	An ancient variant of Sanskrit. Pāli is the literary language of the early Buddhists and the language in which the texts of the original Buddhist Canon (<i>Tipiṭaka</i>) are preserved.
pañca-nīvaraṇa	'Five hindrances' to concentration—sensual desire; ill will; sloth and drowsiness; restlessness and anxiety; and uncertainty.
paññā	Wisdom, discernment, insight, intelligence, common sense, ingenuity. One of the ten perfections (<i>pāramis</i>).
paññā-vimutti	Discernment-release—freedom from the fabrications and conventions of the mind. One of the two kinds of release describing the mind of the arahant, which is free of the effluents (<i>āsavas</i>).
pāpa	'Infertile, barren, harmful, bringing ill fortune'. Semerit, bad actions (<i>kamma</i>).
pāramī	Perfection of the character. A group of ten qualities developed over many lifetime by a Bodhisatta, which appears in the Pāli Canon (<i>Tipiṭaka</i>)—only in the <i>Jātaka</i> tales: generosity (<i>dāna</i>), virtue (<i>silā</i>), renunciation (<i>nekkhamma</i>), discernment (<i>paññā</i>), energy/persistence (<i>virīya</i>), patience/forbearance (<i>khanti</i>), truthfulness (<i>sacca</i>), determination (<i>adhiṭṭhāna</i>), good will (<i>mettā</i>), and equanimity (<i>upekkhā</i>).
parikhāra	The eight requisites (<i>aṭṭha parikkhāra</i>) that Buddhist monks are allowed to have as their personal property. Three pieces of robes, an alms bowl, a razor, a needle and thread, a belt and a water strainer for removing impurities from drinking water.
pariyatti	Theoretical understanding of Dhamma obtained through reading, studying, and learning.
paṭiccasamuppāda	Dependent origination. A map showing the way the aggregates (<i>khandhas</i>) and sense media (<i>āyatana</i>) interact with ignorance (<i>avijjā</i>) and craving (<i>taṇhā</i>) to bring about stress and suffering (<i>dukkha</i>).

pha pa	(Thai). 'Forest clothes'. A ceremony of cloth/robes offering which can happen at any time in the year.
Phra	(Thai). Venerable. Used as a prefix to the name of a monk.
piṇḍapāta	Walking on the alms round to receive food.
puñña	'Merit, meritorious action, virtue '. The inner sense of well-being that comes from having acted rightly or well and that enables one to continue acting well.
rūpa	Body, physical phenomenon, appearance, form.
sakkāya-diṭṭhi	Self-identification view. The view that mistakenly identifies any of the aggregates as 'self'. The first of the ten fetters (<i>saṃyojana</i>). Abandonment of sakkāya-diṭṭhi is one of the hallmarks of stream-entry (<i>sotāpanna</i>).
sālā	(Thai). Meeting hall in a monastery, a hall where the monks can meet and eat. The hall is also used for acts within the Saṅgha and for Dhamma talks.
samādhi	Concentration, mental absorption, meditative calm. The practice of centering the mind on a single object, having many levels and types.
samaṇa	Contemplative. A person who abandons the conventional obligations of social life in order to find a way of life more 'in tune' (<i>sama</i>) with the ways of nature.
sāmaṇera	'A small <i>samaṇa</i> '. A novice monk who observes ten precepts and who is a candidate for admission to the monastic order of <i>bhikkhus</i> .
sammuti	Conventional reality, convention, relative truth, supposition. Anything conjured into being by the mind.
saṃsāra	Transmigration, the round of death and rebirth.
samudaya	The cause/arising of suffering (<i>dukkha</i>). The second of the Four Noble Truths.

Saṅgha	The community of the Buddha's disciples. On the conventional level, this means the Buddhist monastic order. On the ideal level, it refers to those of the Buddha's followers, whether lay or ordained, who have attained at least the first of the four transcendent paths culminating in arahantship (<i>nibbāna</i>).
saṅkhāra	Thoughts. Mental formation, compound, fashioning, fabrication—the forces and factors that fashion things (physical or mental). Saṅkhāra can refer to anything formed or fashioned by conditions, or more specifically, thought-formations within the mind—as one of the five aggregates (<i>khandhas</i>).
saññā	Label, perception, allusion, act of memory or recognition, interpretation. The third of the five aggregates (<i>khandhas</i>).
sati	Mindfulness, self-collectedness, powers of reference and retention. In some contexts, the word sati when used alone covers alertness (<i>sampajañña</i>) as well.
satipaṭṭhāna	Foundation of mindfulness. Frame of reference—body, feelings, mind, and mental events, viewed in and of themselves as they occur.
sila	Virtue, morality, moral behaviour. The training precepts restraining one from performing unskillful actions. Sila is the first of the three grounds for meritorious action, together with giving (<i>dāna</i>) and cultivation through practice (<i>bhāvanā</i>).
sotāpanna	Stream enterer. A person who has abandoned the first three of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (<i>saṃyojana</i>) and has thus entered the 'stream' flowing inexorably to <i>nibbāna</i> , ensuring that one will be reborn at most only seven more times, and only into human or higher realms.
sukka-vedanā	Pleasant sensations, pleasant feelings.
sutta	'Thread'. A discourse or sermon spoken by the Buddha. After the Buddha's death, the Suttas he delivered to his disciples were passed down in the Pāli language according to a well-established oral tradition.

They were finally committed to written form in Sri Lanka around 100 BCE and form the basis for the Buddha's teachings that we have today.

Tan (Than)	(Thai). Reverend, venerable.
taṇhā	Craving—craving for sensuality, for becoming, and for not becoming. The chief cause of dukkha.
Tathagatā	'One who has truly gone (<i>tatha-gata</i>)' or 'one who has become authentic (<i>tatha-agata</i>)'. An epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest spiritual goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.
Theravāda	'Doctrine of the elders'. Theravāda is the only one of the early schools of Buddhism to have survived into the present. It is currently the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma.
thīna-midha	Sloth (<i>thīna</i>) and torpor (<i>midha</i>). Sluggishness or dullness of mind, occurring in conjunction with a morbid mental state due to lack of energy; opposition to wholesome activity; one of the five hindrances to meditation practice.
tibhava	Three levels of becoming (<i>bhava</i>): the sensual level (<i>kāma-bhava</i>), the level of form (<i>rūpa-bhava</i>), and the level of formlessness (<i>arūpa-bhava</i>).
tilakkhaṇa	Three marks of existence. Three characteristics inherent in all conditioned phenomena—impermanence (<i>anicca</i>), unsatisfactoriness or suffering (<i>dukkha</i>), and non-self (<i>anattā</i>).
Tipiṭaka	The Buddhist Pāli Canon. Literally, 'three baskets' in reference to the three principal divisions of the Canon: the disciplinary rules (<i>Vinaya Piṭaka</i>), discourses (<i>Sutta Piṭaka</i>), and abstract philosophical treatises (<i>Abhidhamma Piṭaka</i>).
upadāna	Clinging, attachment, sustenance for becoming and birth—attachment to sensuality, to views, to precepts and practices, and to theories of the self.
upekkhā	Equanimity. One of the ten perfections (<i>pāramis</i>) and one of the four

‘sublime abodes’ (*brahma-vihāras*).

vassa	Rains Retreat. A three-month period from July to October, corresponding roughly to the rainy season, in which each monk is required to live settled in a single place and not wander freely about.
vedanā	Feeling—pleasure (<i>sukha</i>), pain (<i>dukkha</i>), or neither pleasure nor pain.
Vessantara	The Buddha's former life; a compassionate prince, Vessantara, who gives away everything he owns, including his children, thereby displaying the virtue of perfect charity.
vibhāva-taṇhā	Craving for non-existence; craving not to have or not to be. One of the three types of craving (<i>taṇhā</i>).
vicikiccha	'Sceptical doubt'. One of the five hindrances (<i>nīvaraṇa</i>); one of the three mental chains (<i>saṃyojana</i>). It also applies to uncertainty whether things are advantageous or not, to be practised or not, of high or low value, etc.
vimutti	Release; freedom from the fabrications and conventions of the mind. The suttas distinguish between two kinds of release: discernment-release (<i>paññā-vimutti</i>) and awareness-release (<i>ceto-vimutti</i>).
vinaya	The Buddhist monastic code of conduct and discipline.
viññāṇa	Consciousness; cognisance; one of the five aggregates (<i>khandhas</i>).
vipassanā	Clear intuitive insight. Aided by a clear, quiet state of meditative calm, Vipassanā is spontaneous insight into physical and mental phenomena, as they arise and cease, that sees them for what they really are: inherently impermanent and unstable, bound up with pain and suffering, and devoid of anything that can be identified as ‘self’.
virīya	Persistence; energy. One of the ten perfections (<i>pāramīs</i>), the seven factors of enlightenment (<i>bojjhaṅga</i>), the five spiritual faculties/powers (<i>bala</i>), and the five strengths/dominant factors (<i>indriya</i>).
wat	(Thai). Monastery, temple-monastery, temple.

Sources:

A Glossary of Pali and Buddhist Terms.

www.accesstoinsight.org

Dictionary of Buddhism, Part II: Thai–English Buddhist Dictionary (6th Ed.).

www.tipitaka.org

Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines.

www.budsas.org



Daily Schedule

6:00—7:30

Alms round at Baan Amphur
(approximate time depending on the season)

8:00—10:00

Morning meal and conversation with visitors
afterwards at the dining hall.

14:00—16:00

Dhamma talk and conversation with visitors
at Chula-dhamma Sālā on Khao Chi-On.

NB:

- 30-minute Dhamma talk (around 8:30) is given at the dining hall on every Uposatha Day and weekend, and national holidays.
- Dhamma talk is given in the afternoon at the Chula-dhamma Sālā on Khao Chi-On on every Uposatha Day and weekend, and national holidays.

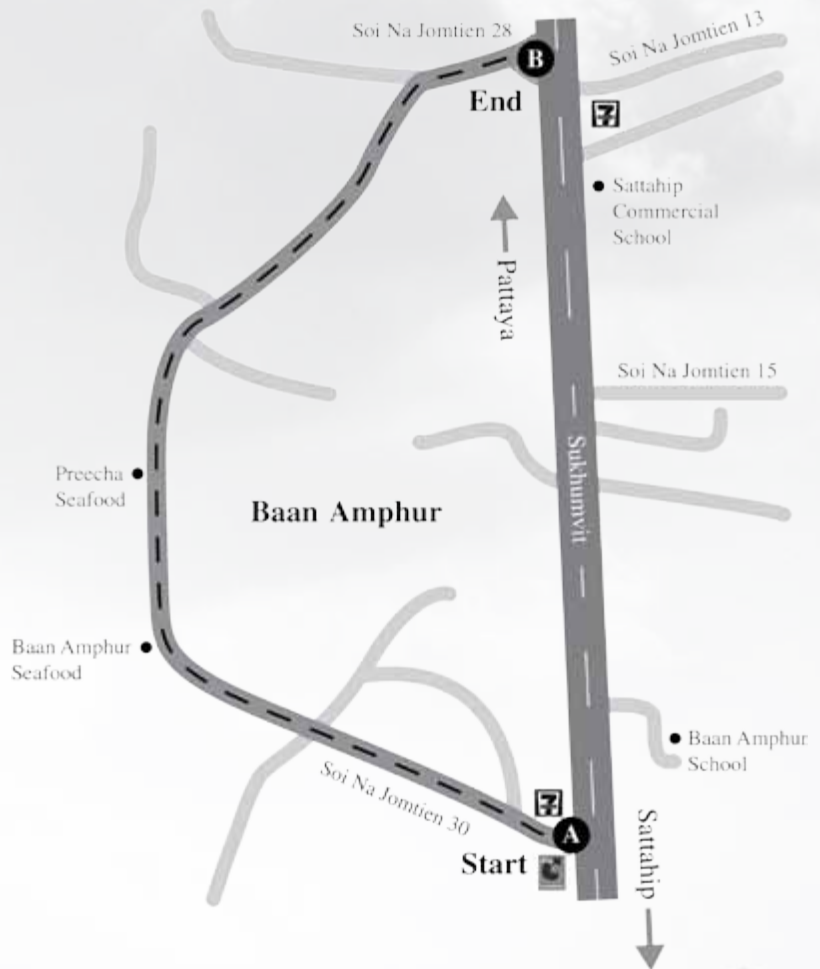
**Kindly visit Phra Ajahn within the scheduled time only.







Alms Route





Further readings and Dhamma

More teachings on Theravāda Buddhism and the contemporary Thai forest tradition can be found at the following websites:

- Recorded teachings of Phra Ajahn Suchart Abhijāto in English and Thai

www.phrasuchart.com

www.facebook.com/AjahnSuchartAbhijato

www.kammatthana.com

www.youtube.com

- English translation of Theravāda *Tipiṭaka* and a selection of teaching from the Thai forest meditation masters

www.accesstoinsight.org

- Translation in various languages of the teachings by Luangta Mahā Boowa

www.forestdhamma.org

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*Questions do not help clarify your mind,
but meditation does.
So rid yourself of all the questions.
Practise as much as possible.
And the answers will surely come.*

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